

JEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

Property of
Graduate Theological Union

FEB 23 1989

THEOLOGY OF EVANGELIZATION

THEOLOGY OF MISSION TODAY

John B. Chethimattam

EFFORTS FOR EVANGELIZATION

Cherian Kochupurackal

PROBLEMS OF EVANGELIZATION

Archbishop Eugene D'Souza

J. Dilasa

S. Alancheril

Mariella

Mirabelle

John Chethimattam

CHURCH AND SECULAR WELFARE

ACCORDING TO KARL RAHNER

Sebastian Athappilly

STATEMENT OF THE SEMINAR ON

MISSION IN INDIA TODAY

THE TASK OF ST. THOMAS CHRISTIANS

Dharmaram, Bangalore

BOOK REVIEWS

JEEVADHARA

is published every month
alternately in English and Malayalam

GENERAL EDITOR

Joseph Constantine Manalel

SECTION EDITORS

The Human Problem

Felix Wilfred

The Word of God

J. M. Pathrapankal

The Living Christ

Samuel Rayan

The People of God

Kuncheria Pathil

The Meeting of Religions

John B. Chethimattam

The Fulness of Life

Felix Podimattam

SECTIONAL BOARD OF EDITORS

Raimundo Panikkar

Ignatius Puthiada

EDITOR - BOOK REVIEW

J. B. Chethimattam

(Contd on inside back-cover)

JEEVADHARA

The Meeting of Religions

THEOLOGY OF EVANGELIZATION

Editor:

JOHN B. CHETHIMATTAM

Jeevadhara
Kottayam — 686 017
Kerala, India
Tel. (091.481.) 7430

CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	315
Efforts for Evangelization	319
<i>Cherian Kochupurackal</i>	
Problems of Evangelization	326
<i>J. Dilasa</i>	
<i>S. Alancheril</i>	
<i>Archbishop Eugene D'Souza</i>	
<i>Mariella</i>	
<i>Mirabelle</i>	
<i>John B. Chethimattam</i>	
Theology of Mission Today	350
<i>John B. Chethimattam</i>	
Statement of the Seminar on Mission in India Today	
The Task of St. Thomas Christians	362
<i>Dharmaram, Bangalore</i>	
Church and Secular Welfare according to Karl Rahner	373
<i>Sebastian Athappilly</i>	
Book Reviews	382

Editorial

What is the specific place and role of Christians in India today? Even after twenty centuries of existence in this Indian sub-continent they number less than 2 1/2% of the population. Like Buddhism and Islam Christianity is a missionary religion, claiming the right to preach and propagate its Gospel. This message is not a particular philosophy or ethical system but primarily a news item for all to hear and understand: in the death and resurrection from the dead of Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago something very important for the whole human race happened. In him the Son of God entered human history and became its focal point and leader. So the one common history of all human beings has undergone a radical change for the better. Secular history has become salvation history and in Christ all are offered the possibility of becoming really children of God.

But the problem is how a religion that simply proclaims a historical event affecting all relates itself to other religions with their own valid messages, doctrinal systems and ethical programmes. Today religious pluralism is an accepted fact and all authentic religions are assumed to be under the saving providence of God and hence considered legitimate 'ways of salvation'. In this situation Christianity has a temptation to be one religion among many competing with the others for the allegiance of the same people or to remain isolated as a minority group with its own customs, traditions, beliefs and practices, thus

forgetting its mission to announce its Good News to all. In the past mission or the work of evangelization was conceived in a one-sided manner. It was simply the work of Christians proclaiming the word of God leading to the acceptance of Jesus Christ, building those who received the faith into a new separate community, working towards their integral liberation, promoting justice and human dignity, transforming culture and thus planting the Church as a visible institute of salvation for all. It did not pay any attention to the past religious faith of those who are converted, the communities of faith they belonged to and the framework of religious culture from which they were uprooted by conversion. Today these factors have assumed extreme importance. So the principal point of discussion in this issue of *Jeevadhara* is how the Christian task of evangelization can be carried out in the present context of religious pluralism.

In defining this missionary task of the Church several points have to be borne in mind. First of all comes the integrity of the Christian message and the identity of the ecclesial tradition that has been the bearer of the message down the centuries. But in emphasizing this fidelity to tradition care has to be taken that one does not become a prisoner of the past. A proper corrective to this fascination of an imagined past golden era is a realistic evaluation of the actual problems and issues the Church faces today. The awakening of the marginalized and the bringing out into the open of long established structures of injustice demand that the Church clearly take the side of the poor in their struggle against the rich. Secularism and religious indifferentism on the one side and the rise of communalism and religious fundamentalism on the other call upon the Church to be the mediating voice

of sanity and reason. In this common struggle for the liberation of the whole man all sections of the community, clergy and the laity, and particularly women have to be assigned an active role in the mission of the Church. Here traditional clericalism and the control and domination by a few ecclesiastics over every project and missionary undertaking appear as the single major obstacle to the work of evangelization today. Bishops who attempt to be full-time fund-raisers, financial managers and bureaucrats all in all, cannot at the same time be perceived as real Gurus, and spiritual leaders. A survey made by a team of experts about what is being done in five mission dioceses of Central and Northern India exposes the over-extended nature of the activities that seem to leave little place for a spiritual message of any depth. Cherian Kochupurackal who led the team gives the gist of the survey in his article on 'Efforts for Evangelization'. To many evangelization means no more than work directed toward conversion of individuals and their ritual baptism, whereas the individual has to be converted together with the whole society through transition from a situation of sin and bondage to an environment of the reign of God.

The question remains what we Christians actually contribute to the religious experience of the Indian people. Are our activities still a distant echo of the colonial era? Why is it that our missionary efforts produce such meagre results? Is our mission work something in competition with or against other religions? Should it not rather be a work of collaboration with people of other faiths in the common search for truth and the salvation of all God's children? These questions were presented to a select number of bishops and religious major superiors. These answers as well as materials collected through personal interviews together with my observations

are presented in the article on 'Problems of Evangelization'. Then a fresh look is taken at the "Theology of Mission Today" in the context of world religions.

Sebastian Athappilly gives Karl Rahner's view of the Mission of the Church with respect to Secular Welfare. The *salvific* task of the Church retains its primacy and precisely because of that she is essentially a social factor and an instrument of transforming earthly power. This makes her in certain situations a partner even of revolutionary movements in her mission in and for the world.

A Seminar on Mission in India Today with special emphasis on The Task of St. Thomas Christians was held on August 4-7, 1987 at Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore. Its statement is considered a fitting finale of this issue.

J. B. Chethimattam

Efforts for Evangelization

The process of evangelization involves challenges and responses precisely in the context of the realization of the Kingdom of God. It implies changes in life and environment especially when the man to whom the Good News is addressed is considered in his totality. The man who awaits the Good News, the message addressed to him and his possible enrichment, all these determine the methods of evangelization. This paper is the summary of impressions gained from a scientific survey carried out in the five mission dioceses of Chanda, Sagar, Bijnor, Jagdalpur and Rajkot, originally entrusted to the CMI Congregation. The survey was conducted on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the beginning of missionary activities in these areas by the Congregation¹.

The study intends to understand evangelization, today in the Indian situation, and with this overall objective the major areas of investigation are traced: religiosity, poverty and social injustice in the context of which the task of evangelization is examined. The effectiveness of preaching depends to a great extent on the understanding of the living conditions of the people. The people to whom we proclaim the Good News are to be considered in their totality, i. e, in their social, political, economic, cultural and religious context. This country is famous for its religious traditions. The specific contribution of Christianity with its religiousness is the concern for the other, for the neighbour. It has got political, economic, social and cultural

1. For details of the Survey see Cherian Kochupura CMI. *India Awaiting the Good News*, Ernakulam: P.G. House, 1988.

implications. Political justice, equality, freedom, fraternity etc. are of great value to the nation. However, the political system as well as other systems fail to make the people enjoy the privileges granted by our constitution. This particular situation awaits the Good News, the arrival of the Kingdom of God.

Evangelization in this context is witnessing the Christ event. Christ came to make us enjoy the privileges of the Kingdom of God by liberating us from sin and its forces. There are many areas in the life of the people of India directly related to the message of Christ. Out of these we select three: religiousness, poverty and injustice, in relation to which we try to understand the rest. These realities are real challenges which the missionaries are facing. Evangelization is understood as a process in which preaching the Good News is the beginning, and the realization of the Kingdom of God its final positive culmination. The individual's conversion to this Kingdom necessitates horizontal changes in the society which he belongs to, without which the realization of the Kingdom is difficult.

Evangelization is effected through different ways and means which we call "efforts for evangelization". The word "effort" is used to overcome the limitations of instrumentality inherent in terms such as "methods", "means", and "ways". Various efforts made in announcing the Good News have been identified in the seminars conducted to pool the experience of missionaries. Besides the review of literature, the respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of the different efforts collectively and individually.

Historically the main efforts for evangelization have been found in three fields: direct preaching, education and charity works. Dialogue, ashram life, mass media etc. are of comparatively recent origin. Direct preaching is hardly done in any of the sample dioceses.

Education. Education is the major effort made for evangelization in terms of resource allocation. The national

literacy rate is 36.23 (1981): female 24.88; scheduled castes 21.38; tribes 16.3 against 41.20 of the non-scheduled castes and tribes. The fourth educational survey (1973) reports the real situation of educational services in India. Nearly 1.53 lakh habitations have no school of their own. Where schools exist, 40 percent have no stable buildings, 39.72 percent are without black boards, 59.5% have no drinking water, 35% manage with a single teacher for 3-5 classes, 70% function without libraries. Out of every 100 enrolled, only 40 complete the fifth, and 25 the seventh class.

The service of education is to be understood in the context of illiteracy, national policy, value inculcation and demand on resources. The main educational services of the five dioceses are the English Medium Schools. Only 20% of those interviewed feel that English Medium Schools are helpful to preach Christ in India; 49% think them helpful to some extent and 31% that they are not at all helpful. The role of English medium schools should be viewed against the fact that only 4% of the population of India is familiar with English and that too only the elite group. The excuse that such institutions are open to all sections irrespective of the economic status is unjustified because it requires a particular culture to enjoy this service. Some are of the opinion that this kind of service is a counter-witnessing. Many of the Gospel values are compromised. The fact that some institutions are situated in mission areas does not necessarily make them evangelical. The kind of values inculcated in these schools also deserve special attention. Most of them are personal moral values, such as honesty, discipline, awareness of duty, and excellence. But some of the values perpetuated by our educational services are diametrically opposed to the Gospel. Unawares perhaps we contribute towards the perpetuation of a system that is unjust, exploitative, oppressive and sinful.

Vernacular medium schools are stated to be more helpful to the purpose of the missionaries. But for missi-

onaries coming from outside the region running of vernacular medium schools presents great many difficulties. Non-formal education is comparable to formal schooling and its usefulness is increasingly being recognized in the mission dioceses today. It appeals to the missionaries because of flexibility, diversity, minimum structural requirements, magnitude of the problem of illiteracy, scope for value inculcation, conscientization and, above all, the possibility of communicating the Word of God.

Socio-economic services

The socio-economic services include charity works, welfare and development programmes, medical services, social action etc. These services are rendered in response to specific needs. In the past the government launched various programmes to solve the problems of poverty, inequality, ill health etc. However, even after different trials, the net result was poverty. According to S. Dasgupta, 'development leads to poverty and inequality; inequality leads to tension; welfare leads to poverty; and development and welfare create absolute poverty' (*Towards Post Development Era: Essays on Poverty, Welfare and Development*, Delhi, 1985' pp. 16-21).

The involvement of the missionaries in the socio-economic field is a kind of proclaiming the Good News. Social action is different from all other approaches of perceiving the problem and the role of the people, especially the poor, exploited and underprivileged. Social services include hospitals, dispensaries, rural health programs, boarding houses, works of relief, charity, welfare, development and social action. Charity and healing services have been coupled with preaching the Good News from the beginning of Christianity. Institutionalized medical services are of recent origin. While 53% of the respondents rate hospitals as helpful to a great extent, 63% prefer rural health services to hospitals. The possible reasons for the preference are: low cost, easier availability, suitability to the Indian situation etc. This programme

is based on a realization that health is the basic right of all the people, and the people themselves are primarily responsible for their health.

The objectives in running boarding houses are promotion of education, Christian formation of the future generation, job-training integration with the rest of the society etc. But apart from the environmental facilities provided and the meeting of the daily needs of the boarders, sufficient efforts to realize the objectives are lacking. Not many of the inmates become integrated with the mainstream of society. The majority of the boys and girls go back to their own communities to face adjustment problems because the atmosphere in which they lived during their stay in boarding houses is different in many ways. Besides, the boarders belong mostly to scheduled groups and even during their stay in the institution they are denied opportunities to mingle with their age groups outside. All these suggest the need for concrete plans and effective steps to achieve the objectives of the boarding houses.

Next to education, the priority in terms of resource-allocation falls on development and welfare works. 40% of the respondents find these effective to a great extent and 45% to some extent. One difficulty with these projects is that it is not easy to run such projects without recourse to unfair means and dependence on other sources for maintenance. Such projects and big institutions also create an impression that missionaries have plenty of money. Missionaries are often considered social workers thus blocking out the spiritual message they bear. In this respect micro projects are found to be more helpful to reach out to the people and to preach the Gospel.

Living and working in villages: India is primarily rural in many ways: population, economy, culture, caste, religious belief etc. Understanding of the rural situation and the life of the people in such areas has motivated missionaries to move into such remote and isolated areas devoid of many amenities. In the five dioceses surveyed

a few adventurous missionaries have ventured to face the challenges of a different life-style. Nearly 72% of the respondents rate living and working in villages as helpful to a great extent to preach Christ in India today. Social action as an effort for evangelization is closely related to the idea of 'living and working' in villages. The phenomenon of basic Christian communities presents a comprehensive missionary outlook. Identification with the living conditions of the people, simple life-style and deep spirituality have resulted in the deep commitment of these communities to the cause of the neighbours.

Ashram life and Indian spirituality: A major challenge to the Indian missionary is the existence of a deep spirituality in the midst of mass poverty. The witnessing role of the missionary is enriched by the age-old traditions of Indian spirituality revitalized under the influence of the Word-made-flesh. Many of the characteristics of ashram life have close links with social action: importance of 'being' over 'having', 'hard work', 'simple life' etc. In fact ashram life adds a spiritual dimension to social action and corresponds to the religiosity of India.

Effectiveness of the efforts: From the point of view of effectiveness of the efforts for evangelization, the respondents divide them into three groups in the order of priority.

1. First priority: living and working in villages, running dispensaries and rural health services, and organizing non-formal education.
2. Second priority: hospitals, adult education, developmental works, ashram life, and social action.
3. Third priority: mass media of communication, boarding houses and schools.

But in actual practice the last in effectiveness is the most widely employed. This appears quite unreasonable. The argument that it serves as a point of entry for contact with people does not seem to be valid, since such initial contact does not seem to lead anywhere. In fact the wrong

approach defeats the entire purpose. The argument that our schools aid value inculcation is not justified in the present context. The affective systems such as that of the family present a more conducive atmosphere for it.

Conclusion

Lack of orientation and proper training in mission work do adversely affect the work of evangelization. Neither the dioceses nor the superiors of religious congregations seem to take this fact seriously into consideration. As a result a lot of human energy is wasted. Today evangelization has become a delicate area of activity, and it demands sensitivity to the faith of peoples of other religions, and ability to perceive the real needs of the people. Fluency in the local language and an intimate knowledge of the culture and living conditions of the people are essential for proclaiming the Good News effectively. Failure in this respect explains the poor results, disproportionate to available manpower and other resources.

If individual members working in the missions should derive greater satisfaction from their work, they must be accorded greater recognition, support and more opportunities to exercise initiative and personal freedom in interacting with the hard realities of the mission field. The idea of mission work itself should undergo a certain change. As modern theologians and missiologists suggest, greater emphasis should be laid on creating an environment in which all the people enjoy the privileges of the Kingdom of God. To many missionaries evangelization is identified with ritual baptism and their work is directed to the conversion of individuals without corresponding efforts to bring about proportionate changes in the social environment. In the Indian context 'conversion' should be understood as participation in a historical movement in which the individual is converted together with the whole society through transition from a situation of sin and bondage to an environment of the reign of God.

Problems of Evangelization

For this issue of *Jeevadhara* on 'Theology of Evangelization' we circulated among a select few of bishops and religious major superiors the following questionnaire. It was not intended as a survey but just an invitation for suggestions and comments.

1) What does Christianity primarily contribute to the life of the people it evangelizes? Does it really deepen the religious experience of the people, and if so in what way? Or does it aim at a fuller human expression of religious faith itself, with a sense of the unity of human history and of the one human family? What practical arrangements have you made in the missionary programme to bring out the unique Christian contribution?

2) How do we deal with the colonial heritage of the missions? Do not the English Medium schools, big institutions and the foreign funded big projects carry with them an impression of foreign cultural and economic domination? What can and should be done to change this impression which is a real obstacle to the work of evangelization?

3) Progress in the work of evangelization in the various parts of our country is quite varied. In some parts mission work is at a dead end and there are no conversions. What is the reason for this apparent sterility? In some other parts there are plenty of people who embrace Christianity. What is their motivation? What motivation do we emphasize in allowing people to enter the Church?

4) Christianity is not the only nor the first missionary religion. Long before the beginning of Christianity Buddhism had *dharmavijaya* through the preaching of

Buddha's teachings as one of its main programmes. Hindu Acharyas tried through teaching and debate to convert all to their religious faith. Islam has always been proselytic. If, as Vatican II says, Mission work is nothing less and nothing more than doing God's will here and now in the search for truth, should not mission work be a joint interreligious effort? Does the Church make greater progress in her mission to bring about the Kingdom of God by fighting it alone as a minority institution over against the others, or rather by striving along with all forces for good to achieve the total well-being of humanity? Is this not particularly true when we are talking about the social, economic and political liberation of the down-trodden masses to whom we announce the Good News?

The many replies received to these questions show a variety of attitudes and approaches and orientations in the various activities undertaken in the name of mission. An obvious fact is that a good section, even a majority of bishops, priests and religious engaged in such activities are only implicitly or sub-consciously inspired by the Gospel in their work. On the whole they intend only to carry on traditional activities and do what everybody else is doing. There is very little incentive to examine critically the meaning and relevance of what they are doing. This conforms to the sociological finding that at any given moment hardly fifteen percent of people are totally dissatisfied with the status quo so as to effectively work for a change. 85% of our bishops, clergy, religious and laity are satisfied and happy with the status quo of our missions and they contemplate only cosmetic changes and minor modifications in their mode of working. So they are not naturally willing even seriously to entertain the questions we have raised.

Some even question the relevance of such questions. In teaching biology or mathematics and in helping a person find a job or build a house why should I drag in religious experience or Gospel values? Are not these activities in the service of our fellowmen directed sufficiently

towards the building up of a better humanity? Priests and religious engaged in educational work, health services and other social and charitable activities are fully committed to the services they are engaged in without any self-interest or seeking of personal gain. Why should one call in Christ or God as an excuse to serve our fellow human beings? But the question arises what difference is there between these 'missionary' educational, charitable and social works and the same activities undertaken by secular agencies that look for legitimate profit and those conducted by the Government? In fact some of our apostolic activities, underfinanced as they are, in the natural concern to make themselves financially viable sometimes are said to engage in dubious fund-raising practices and on account of that bear counter-witness to the Gospel. To be true witnesses of the Gospel missionaries should convincingly show themselves to be committed to the Gospel they preach or at least to the people to whom the message is addressed. Their credibility suffers a loss when their main concern appears to be the immediate goals they have in view, the survival and success of the particular institution, greater percentage of pass in the educational institution, successful completion of the social project and the like. The urgent question is how these immediate goals can be made pointers and sign-boards to the ultimate goal of the total liberation of the people we serve and the establishment of God's rule in their lives.

So some have strongly argued that the recent shift of emphasis from the spiritual message to social work as the first priority in mission work under the pretext of striving for the integral liberation of man is a mistake.

"Burning and blatant as these social problems are, and much as they actually preoccupy us all, they are still really not the first factor in any actual evangelization or discipleship, unfashionable as it may be to say so. This has often been explained elsewhere. Just one example: Imagine some society where true socio-economic justice

is finally achieved in the main. What then? Well, there will surely remain our human weakness, our greed and our loneliness, sickness and suffering, and finally death. Now, we have a Guru who speaks to us on these deeper agonies of our human existence; and he offers life with his call. In daily practice, of even most deprived people, actual conversion works at these deeper levels first." (Fr. Hans Hendriks S.J., Catholic Ashram, Hasaribag).

Some foreign missionaries resent the 'colonial' stigma attached to earlier missionary method ; Many foreign missionaries from countries that have no past colonial contact with India at all still work in India. They would be amazed at the idea of their methods being at the service of colonial powers. In fact several missionaries claim they suffered more from former colonial interference than from any later anti-Christian groups. But what is blamed are the missionary methods and not missionaries themselves. Those methods are geared principally to gaining individual conversions with no consideration whatever of the deeply religious communities and their religious traditions. Their main ideal is conquest of more members for the Church.

We present below some of the replies:—

Part I

1. Let us Face Facts

(J. Dilasa, Superior General, I.M.S.)

1. If we evaluate our missionary activities in the light of the questions proposed, as far as I can see, there seems to be very little deeper religious influence in the people evangelized in recent times. In conversion, perhaps, there is a greater sense of segregation from the larger community than of integration with it. But it cannot be denied that there is some perceptible change for the better in their socio-economic conditions and improvement in their attitudes in general. But educational facilities and social improvement produce in the youth also an aggressive attitude as well as lack of commitment to any religion. We have undoubtedly done our best to improve the overall situation

through our many educational, developmental and faith-oriented projects. :

2. As for the colonial heritage, it is being maintained by our active collaboration. Economic and technological colonization is voluntarily sought after and accepted with all the worst consequences. We cannot deny that some efforts are made mostly by individuals to get rid of this foreign dependence and to counteract the colonial heritage. Apparently goodwill and random efforts seem to be insufficient to bring about a radical change and appreciable improvement in the situation. Even religious vows and apostolic commitment seem to be impotent in the face of this new colonialism.

3. Evangelization as traditionally understood seems to have come to a standstill in many places. This may be due to the changed ideology and attitude of the clergy and the religious. Apparent lack of results in the field of evangelization both in quantity and quality may be another reason. External difficulties and obstacles to evangelization also had their influence. Where it is successful the important motivation may be better educational opportunities and hope of socio-economic improvement. But we cannot however deny that there are also rare cases of deep religious experience that influenced the decision to embrace Christianity.

4. If mission work is only what is going on now under that title there is plenty of scope for collaboration among people of all faiths. If missionary activity is envisaged only as creating a better human family or spreading of the values of the kingdom of God, joint interreligious missionary activity is not only possible but also imperative. Here the biggest difficulty in evangelization is the yawning gap between the message of Christ and its actual realization and true incarnation in the life of the followers of Christ, especially in the ex-professo followers of Christ, the religious and the priests.

But if we accept the unique claims of Christ as the one Son of God who entered human history and radically changed it as the Lord of history, there is very little scope for interreligious collaboration. As heralds of the one

Gospel of salvation we have to proclaim it and others have to accept it. Similarly if we consider the unique mission of the Church to continue the work of Christ, I wonder how an interreligious missionary activity is possible.

2. Our Work of Evangelization

(S. Alancheril, Provincial, Salesian Province of Calcutta)

We evangelize mainly through the apostolate of education in its various forms, formal as well as non-formal education, technical education, and the use of mass media of communication. After all we are not masters of salvation but only heralds of the Gospel sent to proclaim and communicate the Good News of salvation. We address our message to rational human beings who have to listen and understand and accept it. So we achieve a gradual all-round amelioration of the total person.

As for the impression of colonialism created by English medium schools and big institutions, in our recent provincial chapter, we have decided that our educational apostolate will be oriented to the rural population. In fact we have turned down several requests for opening English Medium Schools.

In our mission work we have areas where plenty of people embrace the faith and also those where there are no conversions. The reasons for this difference is certainly varied. A partial answer for the difference may be the words of the Bible: "The poor will have the Gospel preached to them."

Certainly a lot of co-operation and interreligious collaboration and common search for truth is needed to create the basic condition for sowing the seed of "Good News". People have to accept each other in good faith. In this all religions can cooperate. But real change of heart or conversion, that means conversion to any faith can take place only in the deepest centre of an individual. It can happen only when genuine holiness of Christ and of the saints of various faiths is made visible.

3. Let us be Realistic

(Archbishop Eugene D'Souza, Bhopal)

I may not be able to touch on all the points raised in the circular. I may not also follow the order of the questions. But I would certainly want to share some reflections regarding so many matters that keep troubling us in our Mission work these days.

1. Conditions today in the Missions, particularly in the North, are not easy and in some regions of M. P. there is open hostility and opposition. In this context particularly, the young priest today keeps asking himself what is one to do. While in the Seminary he has been told a lot about pastoral and mission work: as for instance, when we are ordained Bishops there is the beautiful advice that keeps ringing in our ears: 'Episcopo est baptizare, sanctificare, consecrare'. The life of a priest like that of a Bishop often has to do with everything else but what we have been told in the Seminary. And if added to this disillusionment he finds a lot of road blocks and hurdles and sometimes also threats and abuse (as has been happening recently in many parts of M.P.) then what does he do? It is not unusual that he just folds his hands in half despair. If he has the good fortune of the companionship of some enthusiastic companion of his, well and good; otherwise his can become a lonely and trying existence.

2. Somewhere in your letter you make mention of "conversions". I really wish this word were deleted from our (Christian) vocabulary. I sincerely believe that no other word is doing so much of harm to the Church particularly in India. Things have changed considerably and many of us are still living in the past. You have also made reference to a 'colonial heritage'. I would go along with you in this and say that this colonial attitude is still very much with us today. We love to count heads!

Sometime back one good Founder of a Religious Congregation of Sisters whom I brought recently to Bhopal in order to encourage them, after making the

rounds of his Sisters is supposed to have told them in no unmistaken terms: 'Look here, Sisters, I am disappointed with your work in this Mission because you are getting no conversions'. And yet I sincerely believe these little Sisters are doing a wonderful job, dedicated, hardworking, self-sacrificing. In their own unassuming way they have endeared themselves to the common folk. One significant incident stands out. We had a group of Protestant doctors conducting an eye camp in one of our stations. On the concluding day I happened to be there and one of the doctors invited the group for a parting thanksgiving spontaneous prayer. They prayed and I too did say a prayer and all of a sudden from behind me a woman's voice broke out into what I thought was a most beautiful prayer. It was one Village Health Worker of ours with whom the Sisters say a prayer every day and she was a Hindu. If this is not evangelisation, what is?

3. One of your questions seems to raise doubts about the propriety and expediency of our educational effort: Today this seems to be the only avenue that is open, at least seems to be open to most of our priests particularly of the younger generation. And if one cuts even this off, then there will be practically nothing for the poor priest to do. Personally I still believe that the Church has an important role to play in this sphere of education. The question of the medium to my mind is only secondary. There is always the proviso that we keep our ideals high and the mercenary spirit doesn't get the upper hand. In some of our areas, take for instance, the capital city of Bhopal, the Church is still young. When I came here we were not known and hence there was a lot of prejudice. Today the Church can hold its head high because it enjoys the respect of our people even in governmental circles. Various factors have no doubt contributed to this. To a large extent I personally believe that it has been the slow but steady work of the few good educational institutions we have in Bhopal as also in the State of M.P. We are a small minority, but very much respected, if not admired. Whenever there is tension and a crisis situation the

interesting thing is that the government always looks out for our support and cooperation.

To give one little instance which took place recently: During the Ramzan prayers in preparation for the last feast of Id some RSS miscreants suddenly took it into their heads to put up a little temple within the walls, if you please, of one of the leading mosques in the city. There was naturally an uproar. Tension mounted which could have resulted in a terrific conflict. A Peace Meeting was called by the C. M. I was invited with other religious and political leaders. As an outcome of the Meeting a decision was taken to conduct a "Peace March" the next day through the city. The C. M. again insisted (nicely) on my being there and during the March he saw to it that I was walking close to him, a gesture that was certainly appreciated. Instances like these can be multiplied and we never know how much people appreciate the mere fact of our being present in problem situations of this kind.

To come back to what we were discussing: This is why I wouldn't go along with those who throw a blanket ban on our educational effort. This is where I believe the CRI today is doing a lot of harm. You have no idea how difficult it is for us Bishops in these small Mission Dioceses of the north to get Religious to open out educational institutions, I mean schools, which in some areas are a dire need. The stock reply is that we "have taken a resolution of preferential option for the poor". This has become more of a cliché than anything else. All of us loveslogans and this is what many of our religious groups are doing today. Because of this so called "preferential option for the poor", true to the iconoclastic attitudes of some of our *avant garde* theologians, they want to throw everything over board. What is there to substitute in its place is any body's guess. Our poor Religious Sisters are being literally thrust into rural and mission areas without any preparation and training and this can be hazardous. It's rather unfortunate that so many of our Major Religious

Congregations are taking this peculiar stand and adopt this bias against education and schools. As a result they do not realise that almost overnight they have succeeded in making all those engaged in the educational apostolate as second class citizens in the Kingdom of God. I still believe there is plenty of room and scope for good apostolic work in and through our schools. What is necessary certainly is up-grading the quality of our performance. But please do not let them throw away the "baby with the bath water", as many of our religious groups are doing today.

4. I go along with you and say that there are many things in our attitudes and Mission activities that must change. For a long time we have been in the habit of going at it alone. This attitude has not paid dividends specially in our Mission areas of M.P. As it is there is the tag on us being something foreign. And whether we like to believe it or not there is so much of "separateness" in our way of living, why also in our way of thinking. This "we-are-not-like-the-rest-of-men-" attitude must change. I personally believe we can get lots more mileage particularly in the climate in which we are living today in our areas, by joining hands wherever we can with all people of good will. And they are so many. Christ if anything was a catalyst par excellence. This is what every priest and missionary must be today, building bridges of understanding, peace and love.

There's so much that one would really want to add and to say. It is hardly possible for one to do justice to many of the ideas that you are mooting within the short space of a letter or an article. I really wish problems like these could be touched on and discussed at every meeting of priests and particularly of Bishops. Often we talk about everything else except "the one thing necessary".

4. A. Our Mission is Education

(Mariella, Superior General, Apostolic Carmel)

1. Christianity primarily deepens the identity consciousness and awareness of the people it evangelizes by giving them a realization of their divine human solidarity as

members of the Church — the mystical body of Christ. It does perhaps actually deepen the religious experience of the people evangelized, but definitely and emphatically transforms it into a living faith in Christ, confidence in Mary and the Saints, and at least in a few into an experience of Trinitarian relationship of grace.

Its major effective change is the fuller human expression of religious faith with a sense of belonging to the one vast human family.

In our primary missionary apostolate of Christian Education and to a lesser extent social upliftment and welfare, our Institute of the Apostolic Carmel works at the total human development of youth and individuals so that we help to create unity, solidarity and a sense of belonging to the same human fraternity and family.

2. We are aware that English Medium schools, and big institutions etc. are identified with elitism, foreign culture and westernization. However we do not regard them as obstacles to evangelisation for the following reasons.

These institutions influence the upper echelons of non-Christian society with Christian values and norms in an otherwise materialistic and value depreciative milieu and environment.

The knowledge of English and western culture equips them with valuable assets for moving into wider spheres of action and interrelationships which also support the country's progress in Technology, modern media and socio-political and economy based programmes for change and development.

English serves as a link language for communication with the wider global family as also inter state even in India. However we are careful to avoid imbalance and concentration on the affluent sectors of our society by running at the same time a large number of efficient vernacular schools which help the middle and low income groups with value based education. Thus no segment of society is left out from the field of christian influence. We are mindful too of upholding our

own cultural heritage and values preferentially vis a vis any others so that there is no alienation from our roots and culture.

3. There are a number of factors which determine the progress of evangelisation. While lesser motives such as moving into more security, higher state of society and affirmation cannot be ruled out, individuals have borne out that they have been attracted to the Catholic Church for a variety of reasons:

The witness of a strong faith which sustains Christians in their daily life.

Kindness, love and compassion specially to the marginalized and forgotten elements of society — lepers, poor, aged, orphans etc.

The life and teachings of Christ.

The Gospels and the New Testament.

Life experiences and events of grace, favours obtained through the intercession of our Lady and the Saints. When we encounter persons who are attracted to the Church we try to foster a living faith and love in the person of Jesus Christ and love for the Church as the family of God.

4. While it is true that Christianity is not the only or first missionary religion, in our opinion we would not like to support the view that mission work would be more effective if it is carried out through joint interreligious effort. The reason for this is that while all Religions have the good of persons, world unity, harmony and brotherhood as objectives, the uniqueness of the Christian contribution would be lost or masked by such a venture. Christianity aims at spreading the kingdom of God which divine human reality is different from the total good which is aimed at by other Religions. Besides they are dogmatic differences and ethical theories which are not consonant with Christian Dogma and ethics. Hence we would hesitate to support your view of inter religious mission. This however would not exclude multi-faith collaboration in certain areas such as social justice, upliftment of the poor and liberation of the oppressed. Christian evangelization

remains unique and should not be demeaned or debased in its operation and praxis.

4. B. (Mirabelle, Provincial Superior,
Apostolic Carmel, Calcutta)

Our sisters are mainly dealing with missionary activity in schools, most of which are of English Medium. A good number of our young sisters are teaching in schools in tribal areas of the North-East. Hence I have only two comments to make:

1. Though in the North-East the thrust is towards conversions to Christianity, we have been busy with the work of education. We have realized that mere conversion to Christianity has not satisfied our missionary zeal. We realize that the children need education, all round development, a career, sound values which can be given only through schools. I do not know how deep is the faith of the people who have embraced Christianity. When we try to recruit from among the first or second generation Catholic vocations to our religious way of life, we realize that many of them have ulterior motives for embracing religious life. They are basically looking for a better way of life, better, economically. In some cases we have seen genuine faith in people who have been ready to withstand persecution from their non-catholic relatives or neighbours. Hence I still wonder if we have any 'unique Christian contribution' except that the people belong to a larger family of Catholics. Since I have not dealt directly with any missionary activity, I may be very wrong in my conclusions.

2. As for the second question, I firmly believe that without a good education, and even in 'English Medium' our children do not have a chance to 'progress' in life. Perhaps our English medium schools have given the impression of colonial heritage by its non-Indian stamp and association with upper classes of society. English schools are needed for our poor, for our Catholics in particular. If they are to cater to the poor, then we need to have recourse to foreign funds! That is the vicious circle !!

3. Now that I started thinking, I will make a third comment. I like your idea of mission work being a joint inter-religious effort. Sometimes when we are in the company of well-meaning and devout Hindu or Non-Catholic friends, it is very embarrassing to stress on conversion to Catholicism. At the same time, I wonder, how to offer the Good News which Jesus came to give! His message is unique and His person is unique. He expected of His hearers that they accept Him as the Son of God, even at the risk of Crucifixion. How to combine respect for other religions and for persons who hold other beliefs with our deep Faith in Jesus and his message?

Part II. Personal Interviews

Material collected through personal interviews cannot be credited to individual respondents since they were not well thought out answers, but rather spontaneous impressions and opinions. But they reveal our missionary situation much more closely than written statements.

Personal commitment of the Missionary

"Learning by Trial and Error" is the title I can give to my personal experience in the missions", said a priest with thirteen years of experience in the mission field: "Soon after my priestly ordination I did not find our work in our traditional institutions and monasteries very exciting. So I requested to be sent to the missions. After spending some time at the diocesan headquarters to learn the language and get acquainted with the situation, I was sent to a new mission station to do some pioneer work. A small house with one of its rooms converted into a chapel was all that was designated as the Mission. There were no Christians but only tribals and Hindus. Extensive fallow lands were available for cultivation. So a truck load of seeds and other materials for cultivation and also a good load of "food for work", were sent from the headquarters. I called together the villagers and explained the project to them in detail. After listening patiently the villagers explained to me that the seeds supplied could not be cul-

tivated in the area. They were not also accustomed to the kind of food stuff supplied. If the food stuff were sold and the money realized distributed they would be glad to receive it. But this was prohibited and I categorically stated that this could not be done. So the truck went right back to the diocesan headquarters with its contents unloaded.

"I did not have a clear plan of action. I lived alone in the mission house, spent most of the time in the chapel in prayer! One day a woman came with her sick child that was almost dying. She had been to many physicians, spent a lot of money, but the child only got worse. I told her that I was not a physician, could only pray for the child. We together went into the chapel, spent an hour in prayer and then I gave the child some handy medicine I had with me. I expected the child to die in a day or two. But miraculously the child recovered. Similarly my cook had a strange disease: his whole body was swollen with some kind of strange fluid and he was getting very tired and weak. I had some German medicine with me and I gave it to him to try. He also recovered and in a matter of weeks became lean and strong. News of these healings got around and I gained a reputation as "doctor". Everyday good many people from the neighbouring villages came to me with their various complaints for treatment. This ministry of healing helped me to build up a community of prayer. But some people were not happy with these prayer meetings, and reported to the DMO (district medical officer) that the priest was practising medicine without a licence. When the bishop heard that the DMO was going to investigate the matter he sent word to stop the distribution of medicine immediately. Thus my ministry of healing came to an abrupt end. Though the ministry of healing is an integral part of our Christian mission and I was able to secure some sort of a diploma in herbomineral medicine we decided that it would be bad to create any kind of controversy in the initial stage of the mission.

"But my prayer meetings continued: two hours of prayer in the morning, an hour and a half in the evening. Good many people came from the village for these prayer

meetings. The participants were mostly Hindus and the high caste Hindus became jealous of the crowds flocking to the mission chapel. So they threatened the poor people and dissuaded them from attending the prayer meetings. They enticed our principal Hindu helper at these prayer meetings by appointing him the poojari or priest at one of the important local Hindu temples, a very lucrative job. This drastically affected the attendance at our chapel. Still it picked up momentum again and people even from distant villages came and we had a flourishing group united in prayer.

"What is the purpose of our mission? Is it not to build up communities of faith and worship? In our area 'conversions' were strictly forbidden. Then it was question of bringing people through personal contact and keeping them in a communion of faith through common programmes and projects and personal leadership. For religious, transfer of members from place to place and from station to station is a regular routine, but in the missions there is nothing so damaging as the constant transfer of personnel. After some time I was transferred from that mission station and sent to the mission seminary. All the people who were attached to the mission through personal contact with me slowly drifted away and the one who was put in charge of the mission after me had to begin all over again. In the missions where external organization, cultural tradition and legal prescriptions count little, the work of evangelization is a life-long personal commitment and continued contact."

Institution or Message?

The bishop of one of our new mission dioceses explained his experience: "When I and my co-workers took charge of this new diocese ten years ago, we did not know what to do. So we did what all others were doing: With all the money we had we built several churches, opened a few English medium schools, established a few dispensaries and village hospitals. As institutions they are all doing well. People are making use of them. But I cannot say that through these institutions we gained even a single

convert to Christian faith. So we felt that there must be something wrong with what we are doing. So for several weeks we read together the Acts of the Apostles and meditated on it. Then the Vicar General and the Chancellor tried an experiment to find out what the ordinary people expected from us."

The Vicar General explained the experiment: "We wanted to carry out literally the injunction of the Lord to go on foot to the villages and communicate our message to the people. We wanted to go with no money in our purse, but Bishop insisted that we took some money with us. We walked some twenty eight km and came to a village. People gathered around us and asked us who we were and what our mission was. We answered that we came from the Church in the city. People had no idea what a 'church' was. So we mentioned the English Medium School! Every one knew the school. So they began to plead that we should open a school in their village since they had none. In every village we visited that day the same experience. Nobody offered us even a glass of water. Coming from the school we were supposed to be rich. We returned that day tired and hungry. Our approach was clearly wrong. So the next day when people questioned us we did not say anything about the school or the church. We said: 'We are the disciples of Guru Jesus sent out to announce the message of liberation from the bondage of sin and suffering. Guru Jesus is the Son of God born as a human being to share our human bondage and misery, made similar to us in everything except sin. Relentlessly attacking injustice and crookedness of people in power he became the object of their jealousy and hatred. They crucified him and killed him. But God raised him back to life in glory. We preach his teaching that all are children of the one God, all members of the same human family, and that we have to make this world home for all God's children.' People had heard about Guru Jesus on the Sri Lanka radio and wanted to know more about him. They took us to their temple, washed our feet, devoutly listened to our words and treated us nicely. We got the same

reception in the other villages also. We felt that our mission is to spread the teaching of Jesus among the people in a spirit of prayer and fellowship. What organized and stable shape this preaching should take has to be decided by the natural and spontaneous development of the Word and not decided beforehand, nor to be borrowed blindly from the development of God's word in another culture."

The Chancellor spoke about the experience of another preacher of the word in the state of Rajasthan. This charismatic preacher who did not claim allegiance to any particular Christian denomination, originally hailed from Kerala. He with a few companions he had trained in the preaching of the Bible wanted to make on foot the long journey to Rajasthan. But loaded as they were with heavy bundles of Bible-literature they could not do that, and a generous friend bought for them railway tickets. The very first day they reached Rajasthan, they started preaching in the street about Jesus and his message. Some listened attentively, but some miscreants came by, beat up the preachers and made a bonfire of their leaflets and other material. Soon the police came and registered a case against the attackers. But when the case came up for trial and the judge was about to pronounce his judgment the preacher stated that though the defendants were wrong and guilty, as a Christian he would forgive them and would not press charges. So the people were let off free. Soon small groups or communities were formed to reflect on and live by the Gospel, and more young men were trained to preach the Good News. In a short period of five years more than hundred such Gospel-communities have been formed. The preacher's goal is to build up a thousand such communities built around the Gospel without the trappings and structures of a denominational church. This means that our mission is to preach the Gospel without fear. It is the Spirit of God that builds up the Church.

Institutions also have their place

A missionary bishop who spends several months

abroad fund-raising explained his position: 'It all depends on what you want to achieve through the mission. If it is to communicate a mere spiritual message, we all should become wandering sannyasins with staff and gourd in hand. Our mission, however, is to achieve the integral liberation of man, and build up healthy and self-supporting human communities of faith. Ours is a poor nation and our work is mostly with the poor. So why should we be apologetic about getting the help of wealthy people abroad to aid our people help themselves? If the goods of the earth are for all God's children, does not our country also have a right in justice, not merely in charity, for a fair share of it from the affluent nations? So the more projects we can start with the help of foreign funding agencies the more effectively we can, not only alleviate the poverty and state of dependence of the people, but more especially build up leadership among them and start a movement for integral development. We can opt simply to plant the faith in the village culture of today with its extreme poverty and squalor. Fine! I have no objection to it. But I think it will be far better to raise the level of human culture itself, without, of course, denying anything of our glorious past, and bringing it up to the twentyfirst century so that faith itself will have a better basis and medium of expression.

"I cannot really understand all the present criticism of our English medium schools and big institutions. Of course, the rich do profit from them. But they also pay for the service and in that way fund our other activities for the poor! Besides, our institutions present a certain ideal atmosphere for people to feel. Our institutions are in no way foreign. They are genuinely Indian. They are modern, making use of some of the facilities modern science and technology have made available to us. Modernisation is not westernisation! Besides, these institutions gain the good will of influential people. It is not a matter of unhealthy political influence to gain certain temporal benefits. An atmosphere of good will with the leadership of the people is most conducive to communicate our Christian values to the public at large. You cannot imagine the

extent of influence Christian values have exerted into the thinking of the people owing to the very presence of our Christian institutions in their midst. Mind you, evangelization is not proselytisation, not simply pouring water on the heads of people and getting their names somehow into our registers. True mission is one of immanence to be in the midst of the people as a Church, the closely knit family of God, the ideal and model of the restored humanity."

A Church with a Focus

At Sagar the diocesan youth directors of M.P. were starting a preparatory committee meeting to plan a youth rally in the near future. I asked them: "Can you tell me what the theme of this youth festival is going to be? What do you expect as the final outcome of this live-together of young people?"

The leader answered: "We have not made the final decision. Still, I can say, it will be 'Jesus Christ, our Saviour'. We expect some three to four thousand young people from the various dioceses of M.P. to come together, spend three days together and gain a vivid experience of their faith."

- "Why did you choose this theme? What impression will it make on thousands of non-Catholic and non-Christian young men and women who will be watching and listening from the outside? Why cannot you choose a theme with a more universal appeal like the slogan "Solidarity and Interiority" adopted for the world youth meeting scheduled for next December in Madras, organized by the Taise monks of Paris?"

- "Our choice is dictated by our special missionary situation. Our young people coming from relatively new Christian communities have very little grounding in their new faith. They are Christians mostly because their parents became Christians. They never got a chance to learn faith by personal experience. If we propose to such a group a theme that is intelligible and acceptable to Hindus and Muslims alike it will be too general and will not give them a sense of their own distinctive faith.

We should not give the young people an impression that their faith is the same as that of Hindus and Muslims nor send them looking for the lowest common denominator of religions. That will end up creating a civic sort of religion that will be no religion. Our effort is to emphasize what is unique to Christian faith and to communicate to all Christians a sense of urgency to proclaim the special call of Christ to make this world God's Kingdom, home for all God's children. As for those who watch and listen from the outside, our problem with them is that they do not take us seriously as a religion. In their eyes all that we do is social and cultural programmes and projects, humanitarian activities like that of a huge Red Cross Organisation. If our mission should make progress this impression has to be changed. Christ is our God and he is the focus of our life and the object of our faith. Our social, educational and health activities are secondary, just to support and foster the faith of our people. First the non-Christians should get the impression that for Christians Jesus Christ has the same function as one of their Gods, Vishnu or Siva, has for them. Then slowly they can be made to realize that if Christ is really God for Christians he is God also for them, for all humanity. This is the process of mission-pedagogy we envisage."

Conclusion

There is no doubt that in many now working in the missions there is an awareness of the serious missionary task they have undertaken. But often they are prisoners of the past, of policies and programmes conceived in the colonial period, which have a life of their own and still continue even long after the colonial era became a matter of the past. The general impression one gets in travelling through the missions and discussing the problems with people working there is the lack of common planning and shared commitment. One can argue that every single mission is unique, different from others, and that a common plan or programme for the missions is practically impossible. This is certainly true to a great extent. The principal missionaries are Christ

reception in the other villages also. We felt that our mission is to spread the teaching of Jesus among the people in a spirit of prayer and fellowship. What organized and stable shape this preaching should take has to be decided by the natural and spontaneous development of the Word and not decided beforehand, nor to be borrowed blindly from the development of God's word in another culture."

The Chancellor spoke about the experience of another preacher of the word in the state of Rajasthan. This charismatic preacher who did not claim allegiance to any particular Christian denomination, originally hailed from Kerala. He with a few companions he had trained in the preaching of the Bible wanted to make on foot the long journey to Rajasthan. But loaded as they were with heavy bundles of Bible-literature they could not do that, and a generous friend bought for them railway tickets. The very first day they reached Rajasthan, they started preaching in the street about Jesus and his message. Some listened attentively, but some miscreants came by, beat up the preachers and made a bonfire of their leaflets and other material. Soon the police came and registered a case against the attackers. But when the case came up for trial and the judge was about to pronounce his judgment the preacher stated that though the defendants were wrong and guilty, as a Christian he would forgive them and would not press charges. So the people were let off free. Soon small groups or communities were formed to reflect on and live by the Gospel, and more young men were trained to preach the Good News. In a short period of five years more than hundred such Gospel-communities have been formed. The preacher's goal is to build up a thousand such communities built around the Gospel without the trappings and structures of a denominational church. This means that our mission is to preach the Gospel without fear. It is the Spirit of God that builds up the Church.

Institutions also have their place

A missionary bishop, who spends several months

abroad fund-raising explained his position: 'It all depends on what you want to achieve through the mission. If it is to communicate a mere spiritual message, we all should become wandering sannyasins with staff and gourd in hand. Our mission, however, is to achieve the integral liberation of man, and build up healthy and self-supporting human communities of faith. Ours is a poor nation and our work is mostly with the poor. So why should we be apologetic about getting the help of wealthy people abroad to aid our people help themselves? If the goods of the earth are for all God's children, does not our country also have a right in justice, not merely in charity, for a fair share of it from the affluent nations? So the more projects we can start with the help of foreign funding agencies the more effectively we can, not only alleviate the poverty and state of dependence of the people, but more especially build up leadership among them and start a movement for integral development. We can opt simply to plant the faith in the village culture of today with its extreme poverty and squalor. Fine! I have no objection to it. But I think it will be far better to raise the level of human culture itself, without, of course, denying anything of our glorious past, and bringing it up to the twentyfirst century so that faith itself will have a better basis and medium of expression.

"I cannot really understand all the present criticism of our English medium schools and big institutions. Of course, the rich do profit from them. But they also pay for the service and in that way fund our other activities for the poor! Besides, our institutions present a certain ideal atmosphere for people to feel. Our institutions are in no way foreign. They are genuinely Indian. They are modern, making use of some of the facilities modern science and technology have made available to us. Modernisation is not westernisation! Besides, these institutions gain the good will of influential people. It is not a matter of unhealthy political influence to gain certain temporal benefits. An atmosphere of good will with the leadership of the people is most conducive to communicate our Christian values to the public at large. You cannot imagine the

extent of influence Christian values have exerted into the thinking of the people owing to the very presence of our Christian institutions in their midst. Mind you, evangelization is not proselytisation, not simply pouring water on the heads of people and getting their names somehow into our registers. True mission is one of immanence to be in the midst of the people as a Church, the closely knit family of God, the ideal and model of the restored humanity."

A Church with a Focus

At Sagar the diocesan youth directors of M.P. were starting a preparatory committee meeting to plan a youth rally in the near future. I asked them: "Can you tell me what the theme of this youth festival is going to be? What do you expect as the final outcome of this live-together of young people?"

The leader answered: "We have not made the final decision. Still, I can say, it will be 'Jesus Christ, our Saviour'. We expect some three to four thousand young people from the various dioceses of M.P. to come together, spend three days together and gain a vivid experience of their faith."

- "Why did you choose this theme? What impression will it make on thousands of non-Catholic and non-Christian young men and women who will be watching and listening from the outside? Why cannot you choose a theme with a more universal appeal like the slogan "Solidarity and Interiority" adopted for the world youth meeting scheduled for next December in Madras, organized by the Taise monks of Paris?"

- "Our choice is dictated by our special missionary situation. Our young people coming from relatively new Christian communities have very little grounding in their new faith. They are Christians mostly because their parents became Christians. They never got a change to learn faith by personal experience. If we propose to such a group a theme that is intelligible and acceptable to Hindus and Muslims alike it will be too general and will not give them a sense of their own distinctive faith.

We should not give the young people an impression that their faith is the same as that of Hindus and Muslims nor send them looking for the lowest common denominator of religions. That will end up creating a civic sort of religion that will be no religion. Our effort is to emphasize what is unique to Christian faith and to communicate to all Christians a sense of urgency to proclaim the special call of Christ to make this world God's Kingdom, home for all God's children. As for those who watch and listen from the outside, our problem with them is that they do not take us seriously as a religion. In their eyes all that we do is social and cultural programmes and projects, humanitarian activities like that of a huge Red Cross Organisation. If our mission should make progress this impression has to be changed. Christ is our God and he is the focus of our life and the object of our faith. Our social, educational and health activities are secondary, just to support and foster the faith of our people. First the non-Christians should get the impression that for Christians Jesus Christ has the same function as one of their Gods, Vishnu or Siva, has for them. Then slowly they can be made to realize that if Christ is really God for Christians he is God also for them, for all humanity. This is the process of mission-pedagogy we envisage."

Conclusion

There is no doubt that in many now working in the missions there is an awareness of the serious missionary task they have undertaken. But often they are prisoners of the past, of policies and programmes conceived in the colonial period, which have a life of their own and still continue even long after the colonial era became a matter of the past. The general impression one gets in travelling through the missions and discussing the problems with people working there is the lack of common planning and shared commitment. One can argue that every single mission is unique, different from others, and that a common plan or programme for the missions is practically impossible. This is certainly true to a great extent. The principal missionaries are Christ

and the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, and the charism of the Spirit decides the outcome successful or otherwise of every missionary effort. But what shocks one in our Indian missions is the lack of any clear theological perspective; openness to the guidance of the Spirit is not very much in evidence.

Perhaps, the real culprit here is the Roman legalism and the Roman pyramidal conception of authority. When a mission develops sufficiently it gets a bishop and he is fully in charge. He is not obliged to consult or listen to the priests or sisters or laity who work with him in forming policies, making decisions and drawing up projects. Priests, Sisters and lay helpers are there just to assist the Bishop and they have only to understand his plans and directives and carry them out obediently and faithfully. Even when the personnel working in a diocese come from religious congregations and their major superiors have a responsibility about the activities of their religious, the bishop is not obliged to take them into confidence about his plans nor to accept their suggestions. This is Canon Law and our bishops are more Roman than Romans themselves in their understanding and interpretation of Canon Law. Though collegiality, communion-ecclesiology and the principle of subsidiarity are all key concepts of Vatican II we cannot honestly say that these inspire the organization of our missionary activities. Each bishop is jealous of his independence and rights and hence the Indian episcopate as a whole or even the bishops of a particular region or state do not speak with one voice, nor do they have a common missionary plan or policy. As a result there is very little critical evaluation of what is being done and less of a concerted effort to coordinate scientifically the various activities in a spirit of consensus and collaboration. In each mission station the priest is in full charge and he does not feel obligated to involve the Sisters and other people working with him in decision making. If there is a school the principal is the sole authority and he or she does not want to share that power and influence with others. This legalistic spirit makes dioceses, mission stations and institutions rather iso-

lated entities, establishments, and not parts of the common spiritual movement that mission should be.

But all concerned should realize that there is more than Canon Law involved here. People working in the missions are human persons with consciousness and responsibility. Their commitment is more to the Kingdom of God than to Canon Law and the structures of the Church. The demands of God's Kingdom and the interests and goals of the Church are not, unfortunately, always identical. So it is the duty of the bishop or whoever is in charge to convince his co-workers that his plans and policies are in the best interests of the emerging Kingdom of God, to which they have to commit themselves wholeheartedly. So collegiality is not a fanciful discovery of Vatican II, but the basic law of God's mission to save and transform the world.

Another important feature is the fear complex created by Aryasamaj, R. S. S. and other groups that have produced the impression that preaching one's religious faith and appealing for people's conversion is something intrinsically evil. The right to preach one's faith and gain conversions to it is guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. On account of this fear complex the fundamental task of preaching the Gospel is in most places put on the back burner, made into a sort of clandestine activity, and every missionary is ostensibly engaged only in social, charitable, educational and cultural activities. The present image of the Church as a huge Red Cross Organization derives from this attitude and approach. Our bishops and priests are seen as public officials, fund-raisers, and administrators and only very rarely as Gurus and spiritual leaders. But this goes against the very spirit of Indian religious traditions. If there is one thing we can speak frankly and openly about anywhere and to any one in India, it is our spiritual experience and our faith. In India religion is not a private matter but the very air we breathe and the common atmosphere we share. No Hindu or Muslim in India will be offended if some one asked him whether he said his prayers that day. It is only like asking whether one had one's breakfast. Speaking about

one's faith and presenting it to the acceptance of one's fellow human beings is not proselytism. Faith cannot be imposed from the outside, but has to come from within a person. Explaining one's faith experience to another is to help him or her to attain the same experience by himself or herself. So in India true mission work has to be open, almost a collaborative effort among people of different faiths seeking the one liberating Truth which is no one's monopoly or special privilege.

The clear conclusion that emerges from all our investigation is that the Christian mission in India is in real crisis today! Christians are not fulfilling their dynamic role as disciples of Christ and members of a religious movement that radically changed the world. Bugged down in activities and structures that have very little of the religious aspect in them, they are not giving the Indian nation the benefit of their religious insights in solving the problems of human beings nor providing the spiritual leadership proclaimed by the Gospel. It is heartening to note that many are becoming increasingly aware today of this crisis in the mission.

J H M, 8 Carman Rd
Scarsdale, N. Y. 10583

John Chethimattam

Theology of Mission Today

The Church as originating from the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father is by its very nature missionary. Christ's command to his disciples to go and preach the Gospel to every creature expresses this basic mission of the Church. "Missionary activity extends the saving faith of the Church, it expands and perfects its catholic unity, it is sustained by its apostolicity... and bears witness to its sanctity which it extends and promotes." (AG 6) But in recent times the missionary effort of evangelization has undergone a radical shift in perspective. Already from the beginning of this century evangelization was seen not as salvation of souls alone but as liberation of the whole human person. So missionary attention was diverted to solving the socio-economic problems as the first step of evangelization. The present post-colonial era has exposed the missionary methods of the past as part of the political strategy of the colonial powers to gain domination over peoples and nations. Other religions are no longer considered rivals of Christianity but as part of the divine economy of salvation and the source of inspiration for more than four-fifths of humanity providing answers to the basic problems of life and existence. In this situation there is a rethinking on the theology of evangelization.

Recent origins of the Theology of Mission

Serious thinking on the theological meaning of Mission started only in recent times. Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German thinker of the 19th century, was one of the first to offer justification for converting Hindus, Muslims and followers of other religions to Christianity. His starting supposition was the superiority of European civilization, inspired as

it were by Christianity, over other cultures and civilizations. According to him there is no pure abstract religion, but only cultures inspired by religious values. Since all the cultures of the world had already come to light and since Western culture was far superior to all others the task of the Christian missionary, according to Schleiermacher was to carry and communicate to the less fortunate the treasures of European culture with its Christian values. But soon this was perceived as the thin wedge of colonialism and cultural imperialism. Others on the other hand emphasized the spiritual dangers like superstition, idolatry and ignorance to which people in other religions were exposed and argued that the main purpose and thrust of Christian missionary effort should be on the spiritual plane to save the souls of human beings. Church should not align itself with political powers but must concentrate on educational and charitable activities, geared principally to the spiritual needs of man. A third line of thinking directed itself to the social reality of the Church as an institution founded by Christ as a city built on a hill, visible sign of salvation for all peoples. There is no doubt that souls can and actually do save themselves outside the visible organization of the Church. So missionaries should not worry much about the salvation of souls. Their principal task is to make the Church as the institute of salvation present in every country where she has not already been established and to make its services available to all. So planting of the Church is the main objective of evangelization. Even today these three lines of thinking are in the minds of theologians and do create a great deal of confusion.

Biblical roots of Mission Theology

There is no doubt that Mission is an integral part of the eternal plan of God for the world. Creation and salvation are two sides of the same coin. The internal missions in God of the Logos, the eternal Image, and the Spirit form the basis of creation. The same missions of Word and Love expressed in the Incarnation and Pentecost constitute the divine dynamism for bringing all things

with Man at their head back into the divine source. So Mission is "missio Dei". Gen. cc. 1-11 was not intended as an ontology of creation but as a theology of history and a witness to the faithfulness of God towards his creatures. God is not an avenging judge but a chastising and saving Father. After the Deluge Yahweh establishes a Covenant with Noah. But only after the unity of people is lost (Gen. 11:1-9) does Yahweh call Abraham through whom all the nations of the earth would bless themselves (Gen. 12:3). The universality of the proto-evangelium (Gen. 3:15) "...between you and the woman, and between her seed and your seed" has great significance for the universality of salvation promised by God.

Exodus of Israel from Egypt and the wanderings through the desert were in the beginning natural events celebrated in a profane manner. A good many landless people of non-Jewish origin also were with the Jews. The 'God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' had a Cananite name, with Cananite priests and was worshipped in Cananite shrines. Only under the leadership of Moses did they develop a distinct religion, and through liturgical ceremonies reorchestrate the earlier events into sacred history. When under the monarchy Israel tended to become an exclusivistic sect the prophets call for greater openness. Ps. 87 written at the time of David, recounts, as the words of God: 'Among those who know me I mention Rahab and Babylon, Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia' (Ps. 84:4). Through Amos God asks: 'Are not you and the Cushites all the same to me, sons of Israel...Did not I who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, bring the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Arameans from Kir?' (Am. 9:7). Deuteronomy attributes to Cyrus the king of Persia, characteristics of Moses (Is. 45:1-7). Isaiah proclaims salvation not only to the Jews but to the ends of the earth (Is. 49:6; 56:5).

In fact what gave a missionary inspiration to early Christianity was the christological understanding of Dan. 7:13-14: The Ancient of days conferred on the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven sovereignty, glory and kingship, so that men of all peoples, nations and languages would become his servants. Mathew finds

this passage realized in Christ. Reflecting the ancient court-ritual of the installation of the monarch, Matthew composes 28:16-20 of his Gospel. There is exaltation, then presentation, i.e., proclamation of the exaltation. The disciples worship Jesus. Christ is presented as the one on whom all authority in heaven and on earth is conferred, and he sends forth his disciples to all nations to preach the Gospel and dedicate all to God through Baptism. This symbolizes and declares that the unity of nations lost through sin (Gen. 11: 1-9) is finally restored in Christ. Matthew has no mention of the Ascension of Jesus. The purpose of the mission of the disciples is the proclamation of the reign of Christ among the nations. Matthew's text approximates Phil. 2:9-11, one of the oldest hymns sung by the Christian community about Jesus: 'Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father'. In the same sense in the Acts Jesus tells his disciples: 'You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.'

What follows from the above exaltation of Christ is that Mission instead of being a particular feature of Christianity or of the Church is the restoration in Christ of the one cosmic economy of divine salvation. Mission work among gentiles undertaken by Peter by baptizing Cornelius and companions was not exactly an expansion of the Church but the reluctant recognition that the Spirit of God was already active outside the visible framework of the Church and that Christ wanted his Church to extend its visible ministry to those in whom Spirit and Christ were already present (Acts 10:34 ff). Similarly the Apostles gathered in the Jerusalem Council decided to exempt the gentiles from the rite of Circumcision, actually appealing to the cosmic economy announced by the prophets for the gentiles in the messianic times (Acts 15:15-18). James quotes the words of Amos 9:11-12: 'In that day I will raise up the booth of David that

is fallen and repair its 'breaches...and rebuild it as in the days of old,... and all the nations who are called by my name, says the Lord who does this.' (Amos 9:11-12) All that Jeremiah asks of the gentiles is that they should learn to swear by the name of Yahweh 'As 'the Lord lives' as they taught Israelites to swear by the name of Ba'al (Jer. 12:15). Similarly Deutero Isiah calls on the remnants of nations to declare that there is no other God and Saviour except Yahweh, who in the first place proclaimed his supremacy long ago (Is. 45:21). Ps. 29, one of the oldest among the psalms, was originally a Cananite hymn to Ba'al taken into Israelite liturgy with suitable alterations. Ps. 95 and 46, hymns to the God of thunder and rain seem to have a similar origin. The book of Jona is a typical expression of the universal concern of Yahweh. Jona is a pious Jew who grew up in the reform times of Nehemia and Ezra. He balks God's command to preach penance to the Ninivites, and finally when at his preaching the Ninivites are converted Jona is angry at the mercy of God. But God replies: 'And am I not to feel sorry for Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left?' (Jon. 4:11)

Mission is concerned with community. Since God created man for community and wills that the scattered children of God become the people of God, the law of salvation is that man should be saved through man. So Mission is not the monopoly or exclusive privilege of any particular individuals or groups, but the bounden duty of all to share their gifts and insights with their fellow human beings. Mission is also concerned with the 'world'. It is the encounter between God and the world, and reaches its highest point in the incarnation of the Son, sent into the world to make all human beings children of God (Jn. 3:16). But this is not something artificially imposed on humanity. The whole creation is moving by the weight of its being, back to its origin and source. It is groaning for the appearance of the Son of God so that its natural and spontaneous movement, ineffective in itself may be rendered effective. The goal of every

religion is attaining the authenticity of being and reaching intimate communion with the Divine. But for the finite and limited this is impossible to realize by its own resources: the finite cannot by any addition to itself become infinite. So the unique good news for all religions is that the Infinite has become incarnate, the Son of God has become the son of man, and that in and with that one Son of God all can become children of God. Hence the incarnation of the Son and his taking of effective leadership in human history through his death and resurrection meets half way the aspirations and expectation of all religions.

But how is the fact of divine incarnation and Christ's work of redemption for all humanity convincingly presented to religions? Can it be historically and apodictically proved? First history as an empirical science can never prove a spiritual or supernatural fact, but only at best collect some of its external and social expressions. Even if it could, it would not be worth any thing, since faith is not the result of a scientific investigation, nor faith the conclusion of a syllogism. This is the reason Christ tells Thomas: 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe'(Jn 20:29). To this St. Augustine adds: What Thomas saw was only the risen body of Christ. What he confessed was Christ's lordship and divinity. Religious language and faith have their own inner logic and syntax. So the Gospel cannot be communicated by any amount of external preaching and demonstration. Each human individual should by his inner experience reach the truth of divine revelation. Each religion by its own special syntax of religious discourse must judge the validity of the new paradigm of faith presented by Christ. Any new scientific theory that comes on the scene to replace an old one has, however, to be judged by the old hypothesis. In the same way a true Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist believer can judge the truth and validity of the Gospel only through his original faith. This means that evangelization can be accomplished only through interreligious dialogue.

The recent confusion in mission theology seems to arise from the supposition that it is the task and privilege of a small group designated the Church, directed to the rest of the world. The Munster school advocated salvation of souls the primary object of mission. The Louvain school, on the other hand, held that since souls can be saved even outside the Church, the formal object of mission work is the planting of the visible Church with all its vital structures in countries where it is not yet established. But both these goals have been condemned in recent times as pure Christian imperialism. So the plea is made that missionaries should stop conversion work and engage in pure social activity. Others argue that faith should be considered a private matter and that Christians should join the non-Christian majority to face together the common problems of the people.

The answer to this confusion is to place mission in a wider perspective as Pope Paul VI does in his apostolic letter *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Dec. 8, 1975. Since the plan of creation and the plan of redemption cannot be dissociated mission should aim at the integral liberation of man. It cannot be dissociated from the struggle against injustice (31). The starting point and ultimate source of evangelization is Jesus Christ. The Church has no other mission than that of Jesus, of continuing his work for the Kingdom. So mission has the wide scope of permeating all spheres of human life and transforming them from within (nn. 6-8, 14, 18). It starts with the person and then goes on to the relationship of peoples among themselves and with God, and aims likewise at regenerating cultures from within (n. 20).

Evidently all these cannot be the exclusive task of the Church. The kingdom of Christ is wider than the Catholic Church and the Kingdom of God wider than the Kingdom of Christ. But the Church acts as the herald and witness of the Gospel. Just as pluralism of churches in spite of their divergence in doctrine and practice is accepted as the fact of ecumenism in the movement towards unity, the pluralism of religions has to be accepted

as a fact in the movement towards the establishment of God's Kingdom.

If the mission of the Church is to continue the mission given to Christ by the Father, it cannot be simply preserving what Christ established imposing it on all. It cannot remain satisfied with the thought that non-Christians are anonymous Christians or that Christ is in some manner hidden in world religions. The Church has to follow the lead of the Spirit into all truth found in religions. Vatican II without intending to formulate any dogma regarding religions has given the lead in discerning what is unique and positive in several religions. Surely these unique contributions of religions are integral part of the Kingdom of God. So true evangelization is to accept the word of God wherever it is found, search for the fullness of truth and seek the flowering of God's Kingdom in the lives of all peoples.

Roots of western exclusivism

The exclusivist outlook of the Western Church and its colonialist missionary policy was the result of centuries of isolation from other religions. This narrow outlook led to the Crusades. The belief that everything outside Christianity was error and the principle that error had no right to exist led to the irrational burning of witches and heretics. Martin Luther himself was a prisoner of a Corpus Christianum mentality and in his view Islam was nothing but a threat to Christendom. Another reason for the negative outlook on religions was a lack of trust in human reason, of which the religions were supposed to be products. "Human reason is nothing but blind and dead before God", said Luther in a sermon on the Trinity, "Consequently, it cannot desire or crave for divine things" (*Works*, vol. 12, p. 588). He attacked Aristotle and tried to undermine the position that reason and faith, nature and supernature were complementary. He was indignant against Zwingli when the latter taught that people like Socrates, Numa and Scipio could go to heaven without faith in Christ because of their virtues (*Works*, vol. 54, p. 144). In an overreaction against the Age of

Enlightenment which placed great emphasis on "natural religion" Schleiermacher and others strongly asserted the absolute claim of Christianity. Christianity was asserted as not only the climax but also the convergent point of all streams of religion. The best any one could ascribe to non-Christian religions was of being a 'hidden' sort of Christianity.

Inner contradictions of Mission

In religions as in political parties, the original vision slowly fades and what was a vigorous movement in the beginning to communicate an urgent message eventually becomes primarily a concern for self-preservation. The fellowship of persons committed to the message gradually becomes an organization with an institutional set up bolstered by plenty of rules and regulations. The Church itself instead of continuing the work of Christ of transforming the world into God's Kingdom and effectively communicating Christ's message to all human beings, is more preoccupied with preserving what he is alleged to have established and handing it down intact to posterity. In this situation the ineffable mystery becomes squeezed into the straight jacket of dogma, mission transformed into proselytism to add new members to one's own group and communion in the same divine economy of salvation degenerates into the exclusivism of claims and counter claims.

The Sacraments which by their very nature are effective means of self-communication of the People of God to all God's children came to be perceived as secret, mechanical and almost magical means of grace exclusive to the members of the special group. Eucharist itself presents a typical example. If we closely examine the different formulas in the New Testament concerning the Eucharist we can conjecture that it was perceived as the "New Covenant" in the blood of Christ shed for all human beings, in the Palestinian way of thinking, and in the Greek context as the effective symbol of the Mystical Body of Christ represented by the one bread broken for many. But soon

this universalist understanding gives way to an exaggerated emphasis on Real Presence and a sort of 'theophagy'.

Today 'Conversion' itself has become a bad word! It signifies leaving one's original religious community and joining another, cutting the roots of one's religious and cultural heritage and adopting another's beliefs and practices. This change of religion and religious culture was justified under the supposition that one's past religion was all wrong, and that one had to effect a complete break with the past in favour of the new found Truth. Today with the awareness of the positive value of non-Christian religions such a total break with one's past religious culture is quite unreasonable. One should not deny one's roots, but should only develop and build on the past. On the other hand, 'Conversion' as a change of heart and attitude is a central concept of religion. Religion is no longer considered a blind fascination with the awesome Mystery, but rather as 'conversion and reconciliation'. One must be open to continual change and inner transformation in view of the Transcendent Mystery and also get reconciled with all one's fellow beings.

Perhaps the most radical problem with Mission work is the focus on the divine reality in announcing the Gospel: It is presumed to announce the divinity of Jesus Christ and to present a new interpretation of the divine reality. Since every religion is striving to attain a certain realization of God, this new version of the Divine naturally fails to impress people. It can only be just another view of the incomprehensible. The blind men who had their different views of the huge elephant cannot be much influenced by the new view of another blind man. So those who present Jesus Christ as an expression of the Divine Logos cannot demand conversion from those who consider Buddha, Krishna, Confucius and others as equally valid manifestations of the one divine Logos, which cannot be exhausted by any number of manifestations or expressions. What is unique in Christianity is the divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Here the mystery is not the divinity of Christ — divine reality is always a mystery to man, — but

the human nature of Jesus Christ. Christ is a revelation of man to man. In the concrete human nature of Christ, which has its unique Self in the one Son of God, human beings are invited to find the meaning of their own existence. They have to find the full meaning of their own humanity in the incursion of their life in the life and history of the Son of God, in the adoptive divine sonship they gain through him.

A constructive and collaborative approach

St. Paul himself has presented a very positive and constructive approach to the work of evangelization. According to him in Christ Jews and gentiles are brought into a common economy of salvation: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law...that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the gentiles" (Gal. 3:13-14). Already during the time of the Apostles the original aggressive proselytism in the expectation of the imminent second coming of Christ loosened. As R Schnackenburg remarks the Church began to see its main task in "existence as Church in the midst of the world".

In fact mission is the task of the whole community rather than of particular individuals. Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, the so-called missionary sacraments, first integrate individuals into the community so that they can share in the salvific mission of the Church. As Jomo Kenyatta says: "No one is an isolated individual. Man's uniqueness is a matter of secondary importance. First and foremost he is the relative and contemporary of others. Not only is his biological life but also his spiritual and economic existence dependent on this circumstance" (quoted by K.Muller, *Mission Theology*, p. 98).

The distinction between natural revelation and supernatural revelation is today obsolete. It is the same God who reveals himself through creation as well as through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. So characterisation of other religions as purely "natural" and merely products of human reason is not correct. In the present order of things there is only one divine economy of salvation, and

that is supernatural. Surely as the community of the disciples of Christ, Church should be open to all and is bound to reach out to all to share her faith in Christ and benefit by the Sacraments instituted by him and welcome them to the common worship of the Father under the leadership of Christ. No one can enter the Church without his free choice and consent and hence all conversion is individual. But mission work itself is communitarian, the interaction between two believing communities to compare notes and mutually communicate what is unique to each one.

What Christianity offers to the followers of other religions and to every human being is that all human beings form one family and has one common history. It declares that what every religion was desiring and seeking after, the immediate communion with God, is actually made possible and realized in the entry of the one Son of God into human history in the incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth. Human history is not the same any more after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It has become salvation history. It is as if the ship of humanity after struggling for long through the salty waters of human history suddenly finds itself in the plentiful fresh water at the mouth of the great Amazon river, the divine from heaven, Christ. People have only to realize this fact and profit from it.

John B. Chethimattam

Statement of the Seminar on Mission in India Today The Task of St. Thomas Christians

(Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Aug. 4-7, 1987)

This year 1987 marks the 25th Anniversary of the great event when the Holy See relaxed the centuries old restrictions and granted the Syro-Malabar Church a Mission outside its territory, thus initiating the building up of eight Syro-Malabar dioceses in Central and North India. This year marks also the Centenary of the establishment of the vicariates apostolic of Kottayam and Trichur for the Syro-Malabar Christians setting in motion the process that led to the restoration of the Syro-Malabar Hierarchy in 1923. We the bishops, priests, brothers, sisters and laity participating in the theology seminar held at the Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, August 4-7, 1987 to celebrate this jubilee thank God for this great event, bless God for the pioneers starting with bishop Januarius of Chanda and other bishops, priests, brothers and sisters who courageously and enthusiastically took up work in the field of dedicated service to the people. We express our gratitude for the immense blessings the Lord has given his Church through the sufferings and hardships of these pioneers. We feel that this jubilee should be taken as the golden opportunity for articulating a relevant theology of evangelization in India and its missionary praxis today. We reflected on the task of the St. Thomas Christians in particular, in the work of evangelization.

Questions and Challenges

We started the deliberations spelling out the main questions facing the work of evangelization

today. What is the specific identity of the St. Thomas Christians as an individual church, an apostolic ecclesial tradition tracing its origin to the preaching of St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Christ? What should be the specific character of the Christian communities we help to grow up in the midst of the Indian people? What is our specific task as evangelizers? A certain gap is alleged to exist between the perspective of theologians regarding the work of evangelization and the vision of our missionaries who wish to build a church responding to the call of Christ and of the Spirit already at work in the concerns, suffering and aspirations of the people. Are we still working on the same principles as of the early missionaries who seem to have considered the people ignorant and their religious traditions fundamentally erroneous or at best only rudiments of truth? How can we make our theology and liturgy dynamic and receptive of the new insights and inspirations offered by the deeply religious culture of those in whom the word of God has to take flesh? What message does the Gospel give to the poor and the oppressed who yearn for freedom and creativity?

Should we not bear the liberating message of Christ as a *prasada*, a grace-bearing gift, creative and integrating? Ours should be a meditative and experimental theology represented by the ideals of our Christian ashrams. Our priests, sisters and brothers going out to the service of the Gospel in our missions need a special formation, a preparation for a genuine dialogue with fellow believers of other religions, a formation for kenosis, for identification with the people they serve in language, culture and total outlook. Even the very word "evangelization" needs a certain clarification, may be as a "word of salvation" coming, not as if from the outside, but from the hearts of people themselves. We should really be and project the image of a praying Church.

Our History

The twenty centuries of our history as the Church of St. Thomas should be the point of departure, the source of inspiration and creative challenge in asses-

sing our task today. The identity of our church traces itself to the preaching of St. Thomas the Apostle, to which we have always appealed as the norm of life and practice. This is firmly based on historical scholarship which Cardinal Eugene Tisserant summarised in the memorable words; "There was a very early evangelization started by St. Thomas the Apostle, and mainly in South India". This Church was not passive in the field of evangelization but shared the missionary enthusiasm of the Eastern Church, which was sometimes characterised as a "Church on Fire". Besides it is a church which maintained vital contacts with Eastern Christianity as well as Western Christianity. The centuries old association of the St. Thomas Christians with Eastern Christianity places them in a unique position to mediate the Eastern Christian heritage, especially the Semitico-Hellenic heritage to India and bring about a synthesis open to the realities of today's India and of the world at large.

On the other hand, we are aware of the changes introduced into it down the centuries, and the injustices perpetrated on it through the centuries of foreign rule. Though it came to share the liturgy, theology and spirituality with the East Syrian and West Syrian churches at particular moments in its history, it is not their offshoot or branch but an autogenous apostolic church which has to maintain its distinctive identity, especially in view of the unique opportunity it has to proclaim the Gospel in the context of the deeply religious tradition of India. In this the ecclesial pluralism of three different Catholic Rites, the coexistence with different Christian churches and different religions should be counted a positive asset in promoting the emergence of the Kingdom of God today.

Today the Syro-Malabar Church firmly rooted in its own ecclesial tradition maintains her communion and active collaboration with the other churches in the one tradition of the universal Church. The individuality and identity of the individual church should be an incentive and help towards its organic growth rather than a slavery to the past and a stumbling block on its path of announcing the Gospel

to all God's children. The Church is the assembly of God's people that lives by the Word of God, celebrating, believing and living the word, and finds her identity in ministering to it. So her whole reality should be vibrant with the dynamism of the word and ever ancient newness.

With grateful hearts we look upon the vitality God has given this youthful and dynamic missionary Church, during these past twentyfive years. Hundreds of new communities have grown up in our eight Syro-Malabar mission dioceses. By their life and witness they have given ample testimony to Christ, to the unity of the human family, to the kenosis of the humble proclamation of the Gospel: the life of faith, tranquility and joy and devoted service to all God's children. We can confidently say that they have made a good beginning and shown the way for moving with greater zeal and courage into the future.

Christian faith and India's interiority

Looking into the future we have to reaffirm that our interpretative and prophetic sharing of the Gospel can flow only from a lived experience of the same. This is particularly true in the context of the Indian religious tradition, the hallmark of which is a deep interiority. One has to start from a lived experience of the Word enshrined in the cave of the heart, rise to an awareness of God and of our fellow human beings in solidarity with the whole human society and in harmony with the entire universe. The Church with her apostolic message has to be at the feet of the Trinity of God. She should situate her ministry in the divine plan of human salvation comprising the whole humanity with its religions and cultures and the redemptive history centred in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit helping the emergence of God's Kingdom so that God will be all in all.

In this interioristic approach to God's word, India was in close affinity with the Oriental Christian spiritual outlook. This Oriental Christian perspective has on the level of reason a negative approach that affirms the inability of the human mind to grasp the infinite reality of God. But with the eye of faith it saw in the Incarnation and

the gathering of people in the Church around the Risen Lord a realization on earth of the divine Mystery. We reflected also on the various lines of perspective and orientation that may be said to be common to both the Semitico-Hellenic Christian tradition and Indian thought. Such are the desire to move from the temporal to the eternal, from the external to the interior, from death to immortality, the effort to see the heavenly Jerusalem/Vaikunta descended right here on earth, the vision of the individual in integration with the community, the sense of the hiddenness of God in the heart of creation, and the view of salvation consisting essentially in the liberating knowledge of God.

Sensitivity to the Indian context

In proclaiming the joyful message of Christ in India we have to be deeply sensitive to the plurality of religions that have played and still play a vital role in the salvation of millions and hence form an integral part of God's providential plan of human salvation. We should bear in mind India's sense of freedom that abhors all appearance of domination and conquest, her emphasis on personal preference and personal style even in the religious pursuit, her insistence on the greater importance of the perspective of faith and inner vision than on neat doctrinal formulations, and her outlook on religion itself as a celebration of life. We reflected on the communalistic situation which makes use of religions and their institutional structures as tools for the acquisition of power and domination over others. The Christian communities we help to emerge and develop should at the same time liberate themselves from age old oppression and structures of injustice, serve as a leaven in the mass and bring harmony and peace among communities by their deep faith and constant return to the message of salvation for all.

Gospel to the poor and freedom to captives

Above all the Gospel should always be perceived and presented as the message of effective liberation for the poor and the oppressed. In our mission we see a situation of widespread poverty and of institutionalized injustice

in economic, social and cultural spheres. Here we have to be wholeheartedly on the side of the poor and powerless in their struggle for justice, and make the Gospel responsive to the actual situation. We should not be afraid to pinpoint the actual evils and their real sources through appropriate social analysis. The proclamation of God's Word in this situation should be action oriented so as to transform the society radically in order that it really be under God's rule.

Problems and issues

In this action oriented approach to the Mission we found several problems to which adequate solutions have to be found and great many issues in which proper courses of action chosen. Here the first priority should be given to putting our own house in order, making the Church fully conscious of its sacramental link in all aspects of life to the apostolic tradition, and at the same time open and willing to change its structures to be fully responsive to the times and needs of the people. Various institutions and structures require a radical evaluation, and reorientation of that way of life, mode of worship and style of service. Our priorities in the Mission have to be carefully examined and where necessary radically modified. Approach to and active collaboration with the non-Christian religions in the search for truth and the promotion of the Kingdom of God need great discernment and creative daring. We have to create an attitude and atmosphere of collaboration of the different Catholic Rites, different Christian churches and various other religions in building up communities and in promoting the emergence of God's Kingdom.

Our theology, especially what is taught in seminaries, requires a radical reformulation in view of our missionary situation, so that it be really formative of men of God. The formation imparted to our priests, sisters, brothers and catechists has to be made more effective, more people oriented and suited to actual life and work in the missions. It is highly desirable that the Syro-Malabar mission dioceses work with a common policy and a common style of

evangelization in view of the tradition and ideals of the Church of St. Thomas Christians. Above all those who work together in a mission, the bishop, priests, brothers, sisters and laity should develop a style of active collaboration and partnership in the work for the Gospel. Every one should have an active role to play, a say in the formulation and launching of policies and programmes one has to execute. Effective communication of God's Gospel of freedom and fulfilment to all God's children should be the one norm and decisive criterion.

Resolutions

1) The Church is the sacrament of man's encounter with God; an apostolic church is one which traces its origin directly back to the apostolic experience of the Christ event. The church of St. Thomas Christians has always traced its origin to the preaching of St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Christ and its apostolic identity was consistently recognized by the Holy See. This identity has to evolve and develop in view of its apostolic tasks and the rights of the people to be evangelized.

So this assembly resolves to request all concerned that they take this apostolicity seriously and exercise the duty of this Church to preach the Gospel of Christ to the people in such a way that they be formed in the spirit of the genuine tradition of the church; that at the same time the Gospel is made intelligible to the people in the cultural heritage and pattern of thought of our people; and that the whole ecclesial life and liturgy itself be made responsive to the times, discerning clearly the stable and the variable, the substantial and the accidental, even giving origin to new liturgical forms when necessary, the spirit and genius of the apostolic tradition always remaining our criterion for discernment.

2) An atmosphere of collaboration and partnership has to be created between the bishop and the missionaries even in the formulation of mission policies and decision making. In the onward march of the people of God every member has to play an active role and find satisfaction

satisfaction in contributing one's creative share in the programmes and projects one is called upon to execute.

Hence it is resolved a) that the pastoral councils may be made more active;

b) that there be regular consultation between the bishop and the religious major superiors for periodic evaluation and planning of activities.

3) In our Indian context the image of the Bishop as the spiritual Guru is one of the most important factors in our message to the people; and his role as the spiritual leader of the people of God requires his full-time and whole-hearted attention unhampered by the engrossing concerns of administration.

So we resolve to earnestly request the bishops that the temporal administration and other organizational matters be entrusted to their collaborators, thus helping to recapture the spirit of the ancient tradition of *archdeacon*, *palli-yogam* and the like and to adapt them to the present context.

4) In the mission areas big institutions are now becoming the symbol of big money and political influence and hence form rather a counter witness to the Gospel. Besides our missions should show forth our preferential option for the poor.

So it is resolved a) that village apostolate and small dispensaries and village schools should be given first priority in our missions;

b) that we work in collaboration with the governmental programmes for development and undertake government-funded projects which demand greater accountability;

c) that we be actively involved in the liberation struggle of the oppressed by conscientizing and equipping the people to be in the forefront in the fight for justice;

d) that the dioceses and religious congregations give adequate support to such struggles according to the directive principles of the recent Roman document on the Theology of Liberation: and,

e) that we promote dialogue and understanding and peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths.

5) As the Holy Father Pope John Paul II has repeatedly said, the spiritual, moral and theological formation of the laity has become today an urgent pastoral priority in every local church, especially so in the mission areas. The Vatican II decree *Ad Gentes* on Mission says that even in the founding of the Church the greatest attention has to be paid to raising up a mature Christian laity (AG 21). Syro-Malabar church can make a special contribution in this vital area because of the ecclesial co-responsibility that existed in this church for many centuries in the past, and is an important element of her heritage which needs to be restored.

So we resolve a) that special importance be given to the formation of the laity in giving effective witness to their faith especially in the field of evangelization; and,

b) that we request theological faculties like Dharmarama Vidya Kshetram to give a high priority to the laity and to offer a one year course in theology for the laity, and laymen and women be encouraged to join this course through scholarships and awards.

6) A favourable atmosphere has been created by the letter of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II dated May 28, 1987 regarding the close collaboration of the three Rites in India. Moreover the Roman Congregation for Catholic Education has given an instruction dated January 6, 1987 regarding the study of Oriental Churches in all seminaries. A new thrust has been given by the Holy Father in the work of evangelization.

It is therefore resolved a) that we request all theological centres as well as theologians in India to endeavour earnestly to foster a better understanding and appreciation of our different churches and their apostolate through theological discussions, academic courses and practical programmes;

b) that we request theological centres like Purnodaya and DVK to offer religious sisters, catechists and laity active in the mission dioceses better facilities and appropriate courses in view of their active involvement in mission work: and

c) that DVK may be requested to take a special interest in the study of matters pertaining to interchurch relations in view of a better ecclesial formation of its students belonging to the three rites.

7) Even though both Hinduism and Christianity emphasize the importance of sharing one's faith with others, there is a certain divergence of perception regarding the way of doing it, Hinduism stressing the witness of personal life and *satsamgh*, and Christianity emphasizing also the need for proclamation of the word.

So it is resolved that this gathering recommends to our missionaries to respect the feelings of Hindus in this matter especially in sensitive areas.

8) The silent witness of sannyasins is a powerful force in communicating the Gospel message:

So it is resolved that those specially called to ashram life may be encouraged and that religious superiors show understanding and give positive support to those religious who feel the charism of the Spirit to dedicate themselves to such a form of life.

9) A great part of our ecclesial resources is devoted to the educational field, which reaches out to great many young minds. But communal tensions and mutual distrust with increasing force tend to break up our society.

So we resolve to recommend to all in charge of our educational institutions to promote communal harmony and respect for other faiths by teaching the students the basic values and proposing to them the example of great men of all religions.

10) It is of utmost importance that our priests

brothers and sisters have to be effectively formed for life and work in the missions.

It is resolved a) that the theology taught in our seminaries be properly oriented to the missionary situation of our country,

b) that both professors and students have a lived experience of the actual situation of our villages and live for some time in the missions, and

c) that field-oriented extension programmes and projects in which both teachers and students participate be included in the academic curriculum with proper academic credits.

Dharmaram
Bangalore-560 029

Church and Secular Welfare according to Karl Rahner

The Second Vatican Council quite unprecedentedly emphasized the grave responsibility of the Church to have concern for this-worldly well-being of mankind. The Pastoral Constitution on 'The Church in the Modern World' illustrates this concern of the Council in clear terms. It is a well-known fact that Karl Rahner's thoughts have contributed in no small measure towards the Council's new orientations in this line. His vision gradually found favour with theological thinking and opened the way for the new insights and planning of the Church-World-Relationship accordingly. The encounter with Marxism and the political theology of J. B. Metz have also contributed much to develop Rahner's thoughts further. The *salvific* task of the 'church, of course, retains its primary importance. Precisely on that account, the church is an essentially social factor and an instrument of transforming earthly power. This makes the church in certain historic social situations a partner even of revolutionary movements in her mission for the world.

Church in relation to the World

According to Rahner Church represents the historical tangibility of the order of redemption; and stands as the fundamental sign of the fact that God loves the world. In other words, the church is the concretisation of the historical mediation of God's self-gift as salvation for the world, and as such the sacramental presence of God's triumphant self-promise to mankind. This is to be understood against the background of Rahner's fundamental thesis of the *universal* 'engracing' of the world. The church

is the *explicit* sacral sphere and the self-understanding of the world's 'divinization'. Wherever grace is at work, it has its concrete historical expression in the church. The relation between the church and the world is thus to be understood not as between godly and ungodly, or as between the Ark and the flood, but as between the hidden (holiness) and its historical manifestation.

Based on the essentially social dimension of the church, insofar as she is the collective expression and embodiment of grace and salvation, Rahner conceives the church as an institution that necessarily encounters other social realities. As a social reality, she has inter-relations with all the spheres of the whole society. The church is not for her own sake, but for the whole world at large because she is the sacrament of salvation for the world.

The mission of the church is the salvation and sanctification of the world; she must work as the leaven to transform the world into Christ's Body. But salvation is a reality that has to be brought to its socio-historical experience, because God has willed his self-communication for the salvation and divinisation of the world through the historical incarnation of the Logos. This incarnational principle shows that history and society belong to the very nature of grace. The interiority of grace-experience ought to touch upon and develop man in all his dimensions and affect his society in all its spheres, such as laws, science, art etc. Thus the Church cannot take an indifferent or neutral attitude with regard to social realities. To investigate the relationship of the church to the world and to avoid any danger of an individualistic reduction of salvation, Rahner proposes a 'political theology' that would expound the societal relevance as well as the implications contained in revelation, doctrines and hopes of Christianity. On a larger sphere he conceives of an 'ecclesiological cosmology' as a discipline within the frame-work of 'practical theology' to deal with.

Since secularisation is a process initiated and legitimised by Christianity, Rahner pleads for a relative auto-

mony for the secular world. The Church should not foster the attitude of integralism which holds that the life of man could be thoroughly planned and regulated on the principles preached by the Church alone. For integralism is rooted in the erroneous judgment that, everything if left to the world's responsibility, would become too profane to be considered salvific.

It is a fact that the Church cannot and does not claim to have adequate solution to every problem in the world that humanity faces. No Pope or Council could propose concrete means to lead humanity from the vicious circle of the threat of atomic race or the way how to meet the formidable challenge of population explosion of today. The Church cannot clearly determine which is purely human, and ethical here and now, except that she can proclaim what are truly obligatory *principles*.

Ecclesiastical integralism is therefore not only unacceptable in principle, but also practically too difficult to maintain. But then the Church is left to face a two-fold difficulty in letting the world out of her control. The first difficulty arises from Christianity's self-understanding as an absolute religion of salvation; accordingly everything in the world should become the subject of her religious control. The second difficulty is something historically conditioned; for the Church considered herself till recently as the sole agent of responsibility for everything concerned with the society, namely education, art, science, culture etc. But it is high time that the Church discovered new ways and means of fulfilling her social mission in the world.

Mission of the Church

a) Prophetic task

The Church as an institution has to play a prophetic role in the world in view of the social injustice so rampant today. She does this by strongly proclaiming the Christian principles and 'imperatives' that are to be applied in working for a better world. It is the duty of the individuals as well as groups to adopt concrete steps in the

light of those principles and on the basis of their conscience in existential logic. As a prophetic herald, however, the Church has only relative authority and limited influence upon the world. The laity in the Church should hence co-operate with the hierarchy by adhering to the prophetic, pastoral instructions, should these have some effect upon the secular world. The social encyclicals and the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II provide examples for the prophetic directives. The hierarchy on their part should be also ready to take into account and accept the prophetic impulses of and from the *whole* Church.

The prophetic criticism, which is in fact a service to the world (*diakonia* of criticism) is also found to be necessary as a salutary unveiling of the secular world, as it groans "in agony" under the law of sin, error and transitoriness. The Church has so to remind this world that by its own efforts it cannot and will not develop into the Kingdom of God. She has to preach, however, the message of the transcendence of human destiny and hope of God's 'absolute future' which surpasses all the attained and still attainable goals in history (historical or 'categorical' future). Every ideology that absolutises man's categorical future, is a mere utopia: it blocks man's view of the absolute future, and at the same time leads to disastrous consequences for this world itself. Any humanistic programme that employs human beings merely as means and media for a better world, and overlooks man's absolute value, will lose in the long run its very sense, dignity and power. There are many such utopian ideologies in vogue in the world today which have proposed programmes that in the course of their realization compel the organizers to correct the inherent mistakes of their systems by resorting to worse means in order to save their face (eg., Nazism, Fascism). It is the duty of the Church to warn the people of such ideologies and of their adverse effects upon the society.

b) Loving service

Based on the essential unity of the love of God and the love of neighbour, Rahner argues that the prophetic

criticism of the Church should necessarily include her loving service and humanistic work for the needs. It calls for a new dynamism on her part to find out new forms and fields of self-realization according to the needs and challenges of the hour.

Interpreting the scholastic axiom, 'grace presupposes nature', Rahner argues that the church should help create such natural conditions as good neighbourhood, mutual communication, cultural and educational environment etc., if they do not already exist. Another concrete example would be that the Church comes forward to defend the dignity and worth of the old and the infirm, who cannot contribute much to the earthly welfare of society. This provides hope and consolation for such people and at the same time it is a challenge to the materialistic consumer society of today.

As Christianity is a religion of the Cross, the Church has *ipso facto* to follow the theology of the Cross in her service to the society. This demands that the Church should courageously undertake the task of transforming the society into a more human and social one even though there is no guarantee for its success. This courage has to be drawn from the 'folly of the Cross', and should shine forth in serving even those who despise and oppose her. This spirit shall all the more be made manifest as she selflessly serves the poor, the old, the sick etc., who live at the periphery of our society. Further the Church should not hesitate to come forward and fight against all cases of injustice, oppression, exploitation etc., where the worth of human beings is questioned and trampled down, even if it were necessary to get into conflict with the institutions and power-structures.

Rahner does not, of course, interpret the mandate and task of the Church in terms of a mere social commitment. He rejects the radical horizontalism which considers Christianity a mere socio-political service, or Jesus a mere model for social action and prayer, a mere

self-critical remembrance of the neighbour. He clearly states that the proper task of the Church is the religious salvific task. For him a radical horizontalism is not at all acceptable as valid interpretation of Christianity.

At the same time he stresses that in the context of Christianity being misunderstood as 'alienation from the world, it is very important to awaken and deepen the conviction that Christians must fulfil their duty towards the world in a more radical way than it has been hitherto. In such a situation horizontalism may have a certain priority over verticalism. This would mean only that the responsibility to the world is the task of the hour and not that it is in itself the most important one. As an illustration of this point Rahner says: 'If a Christian finds his house ablaze on a Sunday then he can quench the fire on a Sunday even neglecting his duty to worship God in the Eucharist on that day'. When faced with the danger of a global conflagration 'the Church too may, under certain circumstances, emphasize the duty of love of neighbour more radically than it has done in earlier ages' (*Theological Investigations*, vol. 14, pp.309f).

Today therefore in the life and preaching of the Church special emphasis must be laid on the socio-political involvement of the believers. The immediate subject of concrete realisation of humanisation of the world is however, not the hierarchy or the office-bearers in the Church, but the laity as a whole. The hierarchy has to inspire and encourage the laity to fulfil their task in the world. It should also support the secular institutions that serve the dignity and freedom of man. Moreover, it is very important that the Church within her own life set good example in this regard. Only thus can she function as a critique of society.

The Church being a great potential in the society, there is a modern tendency brewing among some of the elite members of her fold to divert her objectives and mission so as to serve only the socio-economic and cultural goals of humanity. Rahner criticizes very

vehemently such tendencies on the part of the people of God, which tend to undermine the very nature of the Church and distort her sacral image. Christian faith is a faith in God as man's absolute future (fulfilment). 'A Church which would merely be the old-fashioned precursor of a secularized, emancipated society, is too uninteresting. It would be dead historically before it had even been modified along these new lines... It would only be the executive officer of a secular society which has no need of a Church' (*Theological Investigations*, Vol. 17, p. 134). Continuing in this vein Rahner says that 'people who stay in the Church... and want to remodel it into a secular association for humane purposes... would be better able to pursue their intentions usefully and effectively outside it'.

The Church and Revolution

Considering the present social consciousness, Rahner thinks that a just equilibrium between the poor and the rich cannot be achieved through a process of evolution. It is practically impossible to effect any change in the society by mere appeals to the people's good will. Only a 'revolution' can bring about a global change so necessary for the developing countries to have their fair share in the goods of the world.

Although according to Rahner non-violent revolution is the ideal Christian form of social change, he does not *a priori* condemn the use of physical violence as, according to the encyclicals 'Firmisssimam Constantiam' (Pius IX) and 'Populorum Progressio' (Paul VI), in some extreme cases of institutionalised injustice the use of violence may be tolerated as morally legitimate.

The Hierarchy is not the primary leader of such a revolution in the context of social injustice. But it has to recognize the legitimacy of the restoration of fundamental human rights. Besides it might instruct and harangue the followers to take part in the revolution as a Christian obligation according to one's position in the society. This means that the Church should not limit herself merely to applying the laws of revelation to situations, but that

she should gather new insights for her mission drawn out of emerging situations.

Hopeful action for world's future

Along with the various attempts at humanisation of the world, the Church should not, according to Rahner, forget to draw the attention of her followers to that aspect of reality called 'Christian Pessimism'. It does not imply sheer hopelessness, but only the truth of the impossibility of realizing a perfect world upon this earth. Salvation is an eschatological gift of God, that is, a gift which will be perfected and fulfilled only at the termination/culmination of history, but with the dawn of 'a new heaven and a new earth'.

This does not mean that the Church wants to paralyse the human endeavours for the building up of a better world. On the other hand, as a community of hope she encourages man to work out world's welfare and progress dynamically. Further, Christian hope of the absolute future is not a license for conservatism and stagnation; nor is it an 'opium of the people' for soothing their pain and suffering, but it is an elixir *par excellence* enabling man to venture upon the trusting exodus from the present into the future.

Based on the methodological axiom of the mutual relationship of transcendentality and historicity, Rahner argues that a true believer has to give expression to his hope in God by acting also for the future of the world. Hence the Second Vatican Council exhorts the laity not to hide their hope in the depths of their hearts, but to express it 'even in the framework of secular life' and to impress it upon the structures of the world (LG 35). Thus the Christian hope is in its essence, true humanism and a law of action for the world's future.

Reversely, every true humanistic struggle for a better future of human generations is *de facto* grounded in Christian hope; for such a commitment lives on an at least implicit affirmation and acknowledgment of man as a person having absolute value or goal. However there

are persons who though committed to man's better future, yet denying theoretically the absolute future. Rahner considers this not as a disproof, but as a sign of the fact that man in his concrete ethical acts, knows and believes more than what he explicitly states in his theories.

An involvement with transcendence

Along with the importance attached to world development, Rahner lays emphasis also on man's call to transcendence. To him history is the self-mediation and self-realisation of transcendence in time and space. He shows this significance of transcendence not merely based on metaphysical anthropology but also on the theology of grace and justification. Justification is the personal acceptance of grace which brings about in man the 'liberatedness for the immediacy of God'. This induces the justified man not to disown the world, but to accept it insofar as grace is God's free gift and loving self-communication to the world.

Since God is not intrinsically a part of the world, but its transcendent ground, the relationship of the justified to the world, ought to be an attitude of transcending immanence. This means that the justified person should not be on any ground the world's slave; instead he has to transcend the world by the power of grace and 'relativise' it even in his commitment to its development. Only such a man can *freely* love the world. He will not suffocate himself in the deep sea of involvement but reach out to the heights of God fulfilling his duty to work out the earthly well-being of mankind.

Book Reviews

Mission in India Today, The Task of St. Thomas Christians, ed. by Kuncheria Pathil CMI; Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1988, pp. xvi, 365.

The book is a collection of papers presented at a seminar organized by Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, August 4-7, 1987 on "The Mission of St. Thomas Christians in India Today" to mark the silver jubilee of the missionary work of the Syro-Malabar Church in central India. The papers presented in the volume have a threefold focus, the historical identity and heritage of the St. Thomas Christians, the issues and challenges faced by the churches in India today, and, the meaningful and relevant theological and pastoral response.

Archbishop Joseph Powathil of Changanacherry prefaces his paper on the Missionary role of the Syro-Malabar Church with a statement on the ecclesial character of missionary activity. Often missionaries tend to assume mission as an individual charism of the Spirit. But 'evangelizing is the grace and vocation proper to the Church'. The disciple has to preach the message entrusted to the church, nothing else. The final goal of evangelization is 'church extension'. Clearly this discussion of evangelization narrows its scope very much. Since according to the archbishop 'the universal church exists only through and in the individual churches — it does not exist apart from them', mission work is restricted to the history, tradition and even liturgy of the individual church. For it is in its preaching and liturgical celebration that the church expresses itself. "Each church is basically a spiritual community with its own faith version and spirituality'. The particular faith version and spiritual traditions of the St. Thomas Christians are meant for the whole world, unlike the Latin church of India, which is only a local church. So the archbishop argues that even

though the Latin church may need inculturation, Church of St. Thomas is beyond particular cultures and the need of inculturation!

I have to say that some of the 'statements of archbishop Powathil are paradoxical and that I find in them a number of seeming inconsistencies and contradictions. It is one thing to say that the one Catholic Church subsists in the individual churches and that it is a communion of individual churches, but something entirely different and in my opinion really wrong to say that the Catholic Church is simply the sum total of the individual churches. Does not their communion effected by the Spirit and symbolized and actively sought by the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome, make the Catholic Church something more than the sum total of individual churches? It is the same as the problem of a community; Is a community simply the sum total of individuals? Then there would be no difference between people meeting in a market place and a family group. Communion is what makes the one Catholic Church. Eucharist celebrated in Rome and Eucharist celebrated in Antioch and Eucharist celebrated in Changanacherry by archbishop Powathil, though they are expressions of different individual churches, are all first and foremost the Eucharist of Christ and the Eucharist of the one Church.

It is one thing to say that the Syro-Malabar church as an individual church has the same right as any other church to preach the Gospel anywhere in the world, as Vatican II has clearly stated; but it is something entirely different when archbishop Powathil argues that St. Thomas Christians have a right to preach the Gospel anywhere in the world because as an apostolic church they have a different "faith version"! Is this faith version substantially different from the faith version of the Roman Church or of the Byzantine church? Then it is not merely a church, but a different religion! The right of the Syro-Malabar church to preach the Gospel anywhere in the world comes from the fact that its historical tradition, theology, liturgy and spirituality are authentic expressions of the one faith of the one Catholic church, not at all another

'faith version', and that it can make that faith incarnate in the life and culture of the people anywhere in the world. Her individual tradition is as authentic as the tradition of the Roman church and part of the one Tradition of the church.

To argue that the Latin Church in India as a local church needed inculturation while the Church of St. Thomas as an apostolic church did not need inculturation is to miss the whole point of inculturation. As St. Gregory Naziansen says about St. Thomas the Apostle, the apostles were people who abandoned their own native culture and identified themselves with the cultures of peoples they evangelized. That faith should not remain an abstract doctrine and a set of ritual and rubrics but should become incarnate in the life and culture of the people of the place and time in which it is proclaimed is one of the fundamental principles of evangelization. Though a church should be rooted in its past it should not be a prisoner of the past, but must be able to transform the culture of the newly evangelized from within by inspiring it with Gospel values.

As Archbishop Benedict Mar Gregorios points out in his paper, 'The Task of Thomas Christians in India', Vatican Council speaks about the growth and adaptation of the Oriental Churches 'to the needs of different times and places', and it only insists that this must be 'only to forward their own organic development.' Father Mathias Mundadan cmi, in his paper traces the history of the missionary activities of the St. Thomas Christians and corrects the negative opinion of many Western writers in the matter. He shows that though St. Thomas planted the church in genuine Indian soil, in a few centuries by necessity the church came under the domination of the Chaldean church and that it affected its genuine Indian growth: 'What is imperative for every church is self-criticism, criticism of the past and a critical assimilation of what is new. A dialectical tension between identity and involvement, between continuity and change is essential for vitality and growth'. According to Mundadan many of the difficulties for the St. Thomas Christians seem to arise from the tendency to absolutize a particular period of their history, to look to that period as the 'golden age'. He sees the Syriac tra-

dition as a link between the Semitic culture of Asia and the Hellenistic culture of the Roman empire. This mediation between East and West is the unique role of St. Thomas Christians today. Similarly Varkey Vithayathil C. Ss. R. describing the historical struggle of St. Thomas Christians for an authentically Indian Church, shows that the goal is not fully achieved even today, and that they should make a serious effort to make their Church authentically Indian.

Mathew Vellanickal in his paper 'Perspectives on the identity of St. Thomas Christians' tries to create an ecclesiology that can resolve the disagreement even among the members of the Syro-Malabar church regarding the identity of their church. He defines the different designations of the church as local, particular, individual and universal. Through an analysis of Biblical texts referring to local churches he shows that it was possible even in Biblical times 'for more than one Church to exist in a given area'. The Church is apostolic 'precisely because God's Word is alive in her through apostolic message'.

But when he comes to define the identity of St. Thomas Christians in India as an apostolic church he runs into obvious inconsistencies and contradictions. For him the identity of our church is a later historical development: 'The different local Churches gradually develop into certain families of churches having a homogeneous character in the concrete forms of liturgical, catechetical, theological, spiritual and disciplinary aspects. Thus the first local Churches gradually give place to the individual churches.' This line of reasoning is necessary for Vellanickal to argue that the Syro-Malabar church forms one individual church with the Chaldean church. But at the same time he argues: The development of the Local Church of St. Thomas in India along the lines of an individual church of the East Syrian family can be traced back to their relationship with the Church of Seleucia-Ctesiphon connected with St. Thomas the Apostle along with the churches of Edessa and Persia. In fact the Edessan and Persian churches claim their foundation not from Thomas but from Addai and Mari, whom they call apos-

ties; they were only remote disciples of the Apostles. Besides, though the Malabar church received its liturgy from the Chaldean church, it always traced its ecclesial identity to the preaching of St. Thomas in India. Vellanickal himself quotes authorities to show that from the time of the Apostle there was in India an ecclesiastical head, 'the Metropolitan and Gate of All India'. In church government, life-style and spirituality the St. Thomas Christians maintained their truly Indian identity. Vellanickal quotes the testimony of Monserrate and other witnesses 'that the churches and chapels of the St. Thomas Christians in India were exactly like the temples of their Hindu brethren'. So this appeal to an identity with the Chaldean church appears really artificial.

Perhaps what is fundamentally important in this approach to ecclesial identity is the approach itself. Rome takes a strictly juridical approach: In deciding the identity of the different churches it is not possible to find out historically which church was founded by which apostle. So the major churches are distinguished by their distinct liturgical rites. Within the same ritual family individual churches are distinguished by their theology, spirituality, discipline and other traditions. The only criterion for such individual churches is that the Holy See of Rome recognizes them to be so. But from a theological point of view what is important is not this juridical organization of churches, nor as Vellanickal says that some particular churches have developed into a family with a certain homogeneous character, but the link the particular ecclesial life has established with Christ through a particular apostle. Founding by an Apostle is fundamental for an individual *apostolic* church. The celebration of the word, ecclesial discipline, theological reflection, spirituality and the whole life of a church have a sacramental character. That its sacramental symbolism is not derived from another church, but from a founding apostle, an immediate disciple of Christ is something unique for a Church. It is not the result of any ecclesiastical legislation, nor the conclusion of some historical reasoning.

It is an integral part of the faith celebration of a church and faith is not the conclusion of any historical investigation. The unique character of the St. Thomas Christians in India is that their faith tradition was shaped by a constant appeal to the Law of Thomas. This gives the church a unique freedom and spontaneity. But when people try to define the identity of our church through extraneous considerations that identity itself becomes a juridical straight jacket that stifles all missionary freedom.

Other papers describe in detail the character of Eastern Spirituality, the theological heritage common to India and the East Syrian tradition, Oriental liturgies and their need for inculturation in the Indian context. Lay leaders like K. T. Sebastian, Scaria Zacharia and Thangam Jacob explain the unique role the laity can play in the Indian church today. Bishop Cyril Mar Baselios argues in his paper that the existence of three individual churches in India is not any obstacle to the mission but an essential feature of the concrete existence of the church in the pluralistic society of man.

Felix Wilfred in his paper titled 'Some Basic Reflections on Inter-Ecclesial Relations in the Missionary Context of India' raises some serious objections against mission work itself. In the context of the extreme and widespread poverty of the masses, and the awakening of the oppressed masses in the form of peoples' movements, there is a strong Hindu reaction against 'the proselytizing missionary presence'. The socio-political, cultural and religious context has radically changed. What is called for is the recognition and promotion of legitimate pluralism among the masses. So the three ecclesial traditions, 'no matter how ancient they are, stand relativised. Each ecclesial tradition has to repossess its identity in vital interaction with the present challenges and tasks of mission.' So according to Felix Wilfred an individual Church which considers tradition as the only or as the major concern, 'is inevitably led to a situation of refusal to accept present action of God as well as the future God has prepared for the Church'. This would mean that the individual churches if they want to do

mission work should deny their past and their own ecclesial identity!

Perhaps the real problem may be in Wilfred's own typically Western approach to inter-ecclesial relations. Organization and history are the only two models he uses to judge inter-church relationships. 'The decisive criterion in the organization of supra-metropolitan groupings which later evolved into patriarchates and rites was the political organisation of the empire. Considerations of the apostolic origin of a community do not play important role.' This may be true to a great extent concerning Latin ecclesiology and to some extent also in the Byzantine empire. But in the Oriental Church the basis of all ecclesial thinking and especially concerning inter-church relations, the only relevant model is that of the Sacrament. The only relevant question is how the celebration of the ecclesial reality, preaching of the word, administration of the mystery of salvation, organisation of the people, and every aspect of the mission, refer back to the original Christ-event in history and actualise it here and now. The mission of the Church is to inspire the present context and the whole life of the people, their problems and concerns, with that unique event in human history, administrative set-ups and historical vicissitudes have meaning only in so far as they are relevant to effect in the present what was once and for all accomplished in Christ, and communicated by the sending of the Apostles. So the Church and her missionary activity have to be firmly rooted in her past history and tradition. Only in that way it can transform the present!

On the whole this volume *Mission in India Today, The Task of the St. Thomas Christians* raises a good many issues central to the work of evangelization today. There are no easy answers. The volume is surely a fitting souvenir to the silver jubilee of the missionary undertaking of the Syro-Malabar church in North India.

India Awaiting the Good News. By Cherian Kochupurackal CMI. Ernakulam: CMI General Mission Secretariat 1988, pp. 142.

It is twentyfive years since the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala was entrusted with the first Mission diocese in North India. It is the diocese of Chanda which was assigned to the CMI Congregation in 1962. The success story of the Chanda mission led to the subsequent assignment of four more dioceses to the CMIs for mission work in Central and North India—Sagar (1968), Bijnor and Jagdalpur (1972) and Rajkot (1977). This book, *India Awaiting the Good News*, is an objective, scientific and sociological study of the above five mission dioceses on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of this mission. It was carried out by a team of experts led by Cherian Kochupurackal CMI, and was piloted by Poornodaya Mission Institute, Bhopal.

The objective of the study is a fresh understanding and promotion of evangelization in the actual Indian context today characterized by massive poverty and conspicuous social injustice on the one hand and a deep religiosity on the other. Without going into the details of methodology and frame of reference (Part I) and the data analysis (Part II) of this study, I would like to indicate some of the highlights of the book.

The book succeeds in presenting the actual picture of the rural India where 82 per cent of our people live in spite of the ever-increasing migration to the cities. About 28 per cent of our rural population are landless agricultural labourers. The top 3 per cent of the people own about 30 per cent of the land, whereas the bottom 44 per cent own only about 2 per cent of the land. More than 50 per cent of the total population live below the poverty line. About 24 per cent of the total population are

scheduled castes and tribes who are socially and economically discriminated and oppressed by the caste Hindus. After 40 years of independence the country has still about 26 lakhs of bonded labourers. The plight of the Indian women is very deplorable. About 75 per cent of them are illiterate. They work more, but eat less; they need more rest but get hardly any. About 60,000 Indian women die annually in the course of child birth. About 17 million of our children are 'sentenced' to labour. About 40,000 Children go blind every year on account of vitamin A deficiency. One million children (between 1-4 years of age) die every year in India due to malnutrition and sickness. Diarrhoea alone takes the lives of about 10 million Indians annually, and over 9 million people suffer from tuberculosis. India's share is one third of the world's total leper patients. It is estimated that about 60 - 70 per cent of our health problems can be solved by providing safe drinking water and good sanitation. These are a few facts and figures from the book.

The very idea of evangelization was the core of the study. 58 per cent of the respondents see evangelization in terms of "witnessing the Good News", "integral development", "preaching Christ or Christian values" or in similar other terms. Some of their views are indeed quite challenging, e.g. "Evangelization is creating a situation in which all the people enjoy the privileges of the Kingdom of God", "Even non-Christians can accept Christ". Evangelization is seen more and more as the proclamation of the Good News of salvation or integral liberation which demands change of heart and mind, a radical change in our vertical and horizontal relationship. 'Hence any attempt to convert the individual, without at the same time aiming at conversion of social systems and structures, is equal to trying to save the soul while neglecting the body' (p. 83). Many of the missionaries confess that they are not seen as spiritual — really men and women of God by most of the non-Christians, especially Hindus. About 70 per cent of the respondents agree with the statement that 'Indigenization requires solidarity with

people, involvement in their struggle, enleavening their history and 'transforming the people' (p. 88). 81 per cent of the respondents strongly feel that 'in the face of injustice of various types and intensity the missionaries should conscientize people to fight against social injustice, exploitation and corruption and to fight for their rights' (p. 94). About 72 per cent of the respondents feel that priority should be given to 'living and working in the villages', running small dispensaries and health centres, and organizing non-formal education, and this alone could give the Good News to rural India and mobilize the forces and struggles of the people in order that they have the fruits of the Kingdom of God.

But paradoxically in the actual missionary practice of today the planning, strategies and priorities are almost the opposite, and this is the shocking revelation made by this study. The first priority today seems to be formal education including English Medium Schools, boarding houses, hospitals and various developmental projects in the traditional pattern. Our projects and institutions give the impression that we have plenty of money from abroad and that we have foreign connections. The Christian communities we build up remain always dependent on us, and they totally lack the missionary spirit and enthusiasm. By formal education through our institutions we are perpetuating the *status quo* or the present system based on inequality, injustice and corruption and thus seem to support the exploiters. We have also not succeeded in encountering Hinduism as a religion equipping ourselves for a healthy dialogue and interaction. The new concept of evangelization in our Indian situation requires a new orientation in our missionary work and it calls for adequate training of missionaries who should be able to get identified with the masses in their struggles, with their culture, language, religious traditions and

life-style. This study is a challenging invitation to examine seriously and critically our traditional missionary methods, policies and structures. Cherian Kochupurackal and his team deserve our gratitude and congratulations. We have to welcome its findings with openness and sincerity rather than become defensive. Or else we will not be able to realize the dreams of millions of our people who await the Good News.

Dharmaram College,
Bangalore - 29

Kuncheria Pathil